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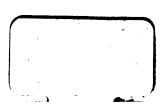
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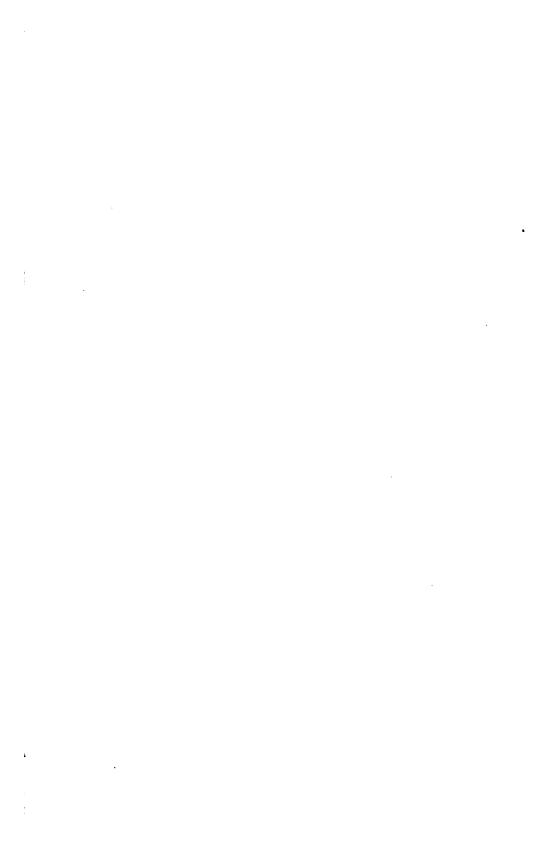


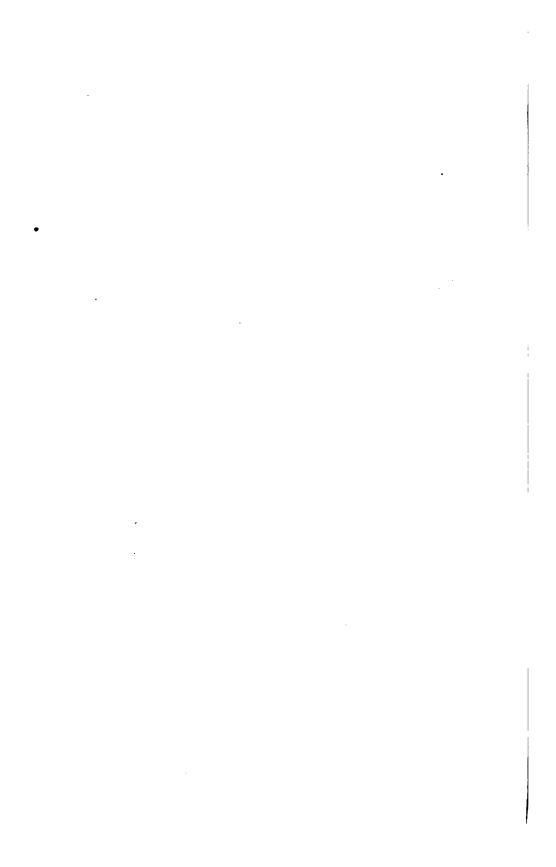
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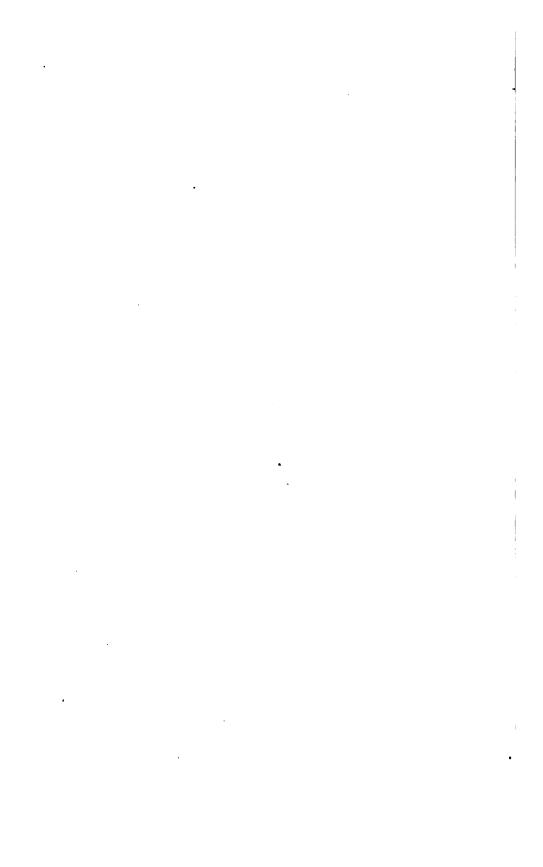


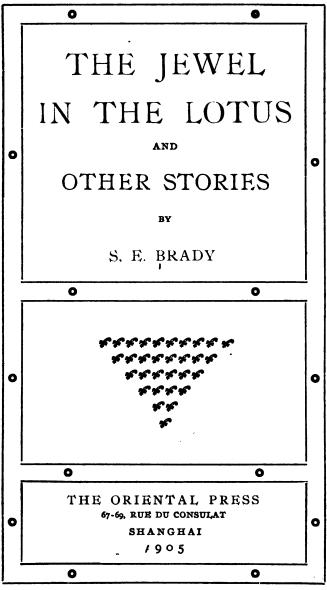






THE JEWEL IN THE LOTUS AND OTHER STORIES





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ASTOR, LEMOX AND TELDEN FOUNDATIONS R 1944 L

TO DONNA

The silver lining to all my clouds

THIS BOOK

IS

LOVINGLY INSCRIBED

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Mani Padme Hum." The words ered into the hair which hung from of a huge Yak. Pa-o's lips were cut rith the cold, and on the muffler that s a respirator, tiny icicles formed, as 1 condensed on the knitted wool. ging close to the animal, who was well as carrier to the man, he was muttering incessantly the mystic 'Om Mani Padme Hum," until the snow stopped whirling, and urricane should cease. Half an hour v had been trudging along comfortably over crunching snow, through an ere clear as space, and blazing with Pa-o, shuddering in the depths of erstitious soul, wondered which of the malignant spirits of the mountain,

offended, that all the warriors of the s should be arrayed against him now.

THE JEWEL IN THE LOTUS

He knew when he left Ta-tsien-lu so late in the year, that he was tempting fate, but his impatience to get on drove him to risk anything, even his life. Hence, the winter having closed in long since, he had been struggling for weeks against every obstacle that malicious demons could oppose to him.

Pa-o was tired, as in addition to the load of tsamba which he carried, to ease a little the second Yak, who had gone lame, his clothes were weighted with silver. In his strong stuff robe, and in the cloth of the "Old Noble," his faithful beast, silver was sewn, each piece separate from the other, lest by an inadvertent jingle, its presence should be disclosed to a lurking robber. The Thibetan knew that as soon as he left Chinese soil, and commenced the entrance into his own inhospitable country, the danger of thieves would be increased a hundred-fold, and he had taken these precautions accordingly.

Pa-o's trip into China, across to Peking, had been eminently successful, and he was coming home now, rich beyond the wildest dreams of the most avaricious of P'ug-nakians, and able at last to claim his heart's desire.

Pa-o was a carver. The eldest of three brothers, he remained in the native village of

P'ug-nak, in one of the valleys near the Lhasa district, and employed himself in fashioning ornaments and jewellery of jade. He enjoyed some considerable local fame, and was really one of the most skilful workers in Thibet. His natural gifts, first displayed in butter carving at the annual Feast of Flowers, when he, with the other artists, had made wonderful representations of everything in nature, all done in frozen butter, had been fortunately developed by a kindly old Chinese, formerly in the suite of the Chinese Amban, or Resident, at Lhasa. Pa-o had been in the habit of going there, in his boyhood, with his father, who, assisted by the "Old Noble," had made his living as a carrier. Hitherto, Pa-o's works had been sent out to the great market of China through his brothers; the younger one of whom having been employed in the annual caravan travelling between Lhasa and Ta-tsien-lu, while the second one kept an inn in the latter town, which was a head-quarters for merchants trading between China and Thibet. Hitherto, also, Pa-o had had occasion to regret the small esteem in which highly-wrought jade was held, and the disproportionately small prices it brought in the market. Work as faithfully as he might, he could gain merely a subsistence and nothing more.

Of course, he could have married T'ukmar, whose name, "Turquoise" seemed to him perfectly to express her, as "dots" and establishments were modest matters in P'ugnak, but though it was the custom of the country and in no wise ethically shocking, somehow Pa-o did not relish the idea of sharing her as wife with his two brothers, who had also remained unmarried.

In the beginning of the Water-Tiger year, however, small-pox raged with greater violence than usual in Ta-tsien-lu, and Pa-o's second brother fell a victim. The voungest one with commendable enterprise, hurrying to secure the belongings of the dead man before Pa-o should appear, himself contracted the disease, and succumbed, and so Pa-o was left the sole representative of his family.

The immediate result of this double bereavement was the discovery that all these years, his lamented brethren had been appropriating the lion's share of the proceeds of his work, leaving him but the barest margin with which to buy materials, and for his subsistence.

"That is what comes of not seeing the world", Pa-o reflected. "They were both men who had travelled, and certainly, they knew business. I, too, must go forth and see more than the mountains opposite P'ug-nak. Certainly, it is necessary! If my own brothers have robbed me like this all these years, what have I to look for from strangers, who cannot be expected to have any mercy for me?" he thought, naively.

Thus was the venturesome step decided He would go to Peking himself. would discover the true state of the jade market, and henceforth have no middlemen between him and his customers. Accordingly, having by good luck, recovered the more valuable of his brothers' effects, he took them back to P'ug-nak, and hid them securely in his hut, away from the rapacity of his neighbours, and one day set forth. villagers, with stirrup-cups of barley-beer, escorted him to the confines of the little hamlet, and watched him depart gaily, riding his big black Yak, on his way down the hill; and then returned to their avocations, and forgot all about him. In Ta-tsien-lu, after depositing the Yak in the care of an acquaintance, to be looked after until his return, he secured employment in the Dalai Lama's annual trade caravan, and started on his long journey across China.

Arriving outside of Peking, he, with the rest of the caravan, installed himself at the Yellow Temple, feeling himself an experienced traveller, as he hobnobbed with Lamas and traders, from all over Thibet and Mongolia. Every day, leaving the temple, he trudged across the yellow plain to the An-ting Gate, and entered into the city, to confer with the iewel merchants. He was amazed at his success, and also at the esteem in which he was held by the jewellers of both the Chinese and the Tartar city, and caught himself wondering whether he was more angry at his brothers for the money robbery, or for the loss of the sweets of fame, for which they were responsible. He was quite dazzled by his financial success, too, when at last the objects he had brought with him had been exchanged for silver. His already admiration for the Chinese dealers' acumen would probably have been trebly increased, besides, if he could have known thoroughly these amiable persons had cheated him.

His business transacted, he arranged for an early departure for Ta-tsien-lu with another caravan on the point of returning, in spite of the sensible advice of his Lama hosts. These, nearly all Thibetans, could not understand why he preferred to exchange the comfortable conditions of life in China, not to speak of his financial success, for the struggle for existence in their own bleak country.

All these recollections drifted through his mind, now, as he stood with his face buried in the mane of the motionless wise old Yak, who knew that a single step might lose them the path, and their lives. He muttered quickly, over and over, the "Om Mani Padme Hum." He hadn't the slightest idea of the significance of the phrase. He knew that the words spoke, "Oh, the jewel in the lotus. amen!" but wherein lay their mystic power, he was quite unaware. Only he knew that he must be saved—he must live through this storm—he must win his way to P'ug-nak, to his home and to her. And the Lama who dwelt up the hillside, in the black cavern which gave the village its name, had always told him that the way to "win merit" was to repeat these words on all occasions. Pa-o translated "to win merit" freely, to suit the exigencies of the situation. Just now it meant to be helped, and to be granted his desire.

The sky was cold, the air stung with whips of ice, and Pa-o's face, such part of it aa was exposed to the air, was raw and bleeding from the combined effects of sun-blistering and snow-freezing. Behind his gauze goggles, of black yak-hair, his blood-shot eyes glowed lurid and hideous, like the eyes of an ogre, and, altogether, bundled up as he was into shapelessness with his sheep-skin clothes, his Chinese hood covering all his head save the front of his face,—with his nose-pads, templepads (extra precautions borrowed Chinese travellers), his goggles and muffler, he looked like some fearful monster of delirium, rather than like a man.

Man he was, however, and thoughtful lover, for carefully hidden in his arm-pit, sewn up in his innermost garment, (which he had been particular not to take off since his departure from Peking), lay a jewel, an exquisite tribute he was carrying to T'uk-mar. It was a brooch of gold filigree. Cunning Canton gold-smiths wove golden threads into flowery shapes, in which they set daintily, the tiny lovely feather of the king-fisher. It was all finer than a wisp of tangled camel's-

hair, and the minute feathers gleamed with the colors Thibetans love—the sapphire of their own high sky, the green of jade, the blue of lapis-lazuli, and the bright blue of their vivid turquoise. Pa-o had parted with much of his lately acquired wealth to secure this gem, but even now, in the cold and desolation of the raging storm, he glowed thought how beautiful warmly. as he T'uk-mar would look with it pinned in the band of cloth she wore bound round her head. It would be a princess's dowry, grander than a whole herd of yaks.

The "Old Noble" stirred, and lifting his heavy horns and shaggy head, surveyed the landscape and sniffed the air. He knew that it was possible to proceed in the teeth of the now lessening wind, and without waiting for his dreaming master's word of command, he ambled forward. Pa-o was accompanied by one man, a servant,—and a new dignity it was for Pa-o to have a servant at all!—who followed in charge of the lame yak. The servant had protested volubly against this choice of routes,—a short cut to Lhasa, which Pa-o knew of only from the descriptions of the travelling brother. He was aware of its danger, but urged on by his frantic desire to

return quickly, had insisted upon risking it.

Up to the present, the lameness of the yak was the only serious misfortune that had befallen them; but now, as the little procession wound its way around a sharp corner, the limping beast fell, coming down heavily, and carrying with it, the servant. On attempting to rise, the coolie fell back with his left leg doubled under him, broken and helpless. Pa-o rushed to his assistance, and lifted him on to the lame yak's back. The coolie, in his pain, begged for the easier choice of riding the "Old Noble", and Pa-o was about to grant the request, when he reflected that the precious burden of wealth the "Old Noble" carried would have to be shifted to the lame yak—less secure—less sure-footed. No, it could not be-no such risk could be run, and so the groaning servant was settled on the back of the almost disabled animal.

Night fell upon them, clear and cold. The youth chose a shelter behind some rocks, and pitched their tent, hanging it only from the center pole. He, nearly dead himself from fatigue, half carried, half dragged the coolie off the suffering animal's back, and placed him close to the fire which he had kindled in

the tent. It was a dreadful night. The injured man, groaning in agony, kept sleep away from Pa-o's eyes, and morning found them quite unfit for further progress. Remorselessly, goaded by his eager desire, however, Pa-o loaded the animals, taking far more of the lame yak's burden this day, and again adjusted the coolie on top of the packs.

High up there, on the roof of the world, the sun beat mercilessly upon them while, as they stumbled along over the frost-splintered rocks of the path, every shadow thrown across it meant a chill as of the tomb to be crossed, before they passed into the sun again. At noon, the coolie was delirious, and the yak hardly able to move, yet Pa-o would not stop. At sunset, the yak, which had been stumbling at every step, finally fell, heavily and awkwardly, and lay helpless with a broken shoulder.

Pa-o was in despair. The injured animal, which he was obliged to despatch at once, had carried the larger part of the food for both man and beasts. What was to be done now? Either the treasure must be abandoned, or coolie and food must be left.

Another dreadful night followed, but morning found Pa-o decided. He made a

bundle of as much of the tsamba as he could carry, and cut choice portions of the slain yak's meat, which he tied to the cords of the "Old Noble's" pack, leaving them hanging to freeze. The coolie, whose staring eyes and black split lips told their own story, he disposed behind the carcass of the slain yak, that the man might not roll over the cliff in his delirium. In his hand he put a knife, by his side a store of the tsamba, and over all he spread the yak-hair tent. Then, shouldering his burden, he strode resolutely away with the "Old Noble", and never once looked behind him.

Day after fearful day succeeded. Alone he trudged on over the unknown path, eating as little of the tsamba and meat as would sustain life. He had lost energy to make camp, and whittled the raw meat to eat as he walked, sucking snow for drink, and at night lay in a hollow of the snow close to the warm sides of the "Old Noble," whose long hair and thick bushy tail served as coverlet for both of them.

At length, after seeming ages, he began to recognize the country through which he was passing—recognized too, that it was within a few days' marches—even his weary

marches—of his own valley. They were getting down below the line of everlasting snow, and the "Old Noble" could find a little pasturage on the tender herbage tentatively put forth by a timid spring, and he could be less sparing of his own diet. His faint heart revived again, and he saw the eyes of her he loved guiding him forward. There was but one more difficulty, and all the rest would be fairly easy.

Above, on the precipice he was climbing, the path ended at a projecting ledge, which hung over an abyss spanned by a suspension bridge. A thousand t'uma below, a river seethed its foaming way over rocks and precipices down to some fair valley in the south. The bridge was supposed to be kept in repair by travellers who used this route, but they were few and he was doubtful of its condition. There were not many who, like him, merited sufficiently the name of Pa-o, or "Dare-devil," to attempt the road he had traversed.

In one hand he thumbed his prayer-beads, as with the other he led the "Old Noble" carefully along the overhanging path. With breathless interest he watched every step of the careful beast, a dread too awful to be put into words gripping his soul.

At last, they stood, man and beast, on the fairly wide spur which projected out towards the opposite bank of the precipice. From a huge rocky projection above the platform they stood on, a bamboo cable as thick as a man's arm was slung to the opposite cliff.

Over this cable a loose slip-loop of tough bamboo rope was adjusted on a sort of woode pulley, which ran more or less easily along the cable. This loop hung down about four feet, and was spliced into a single rope which bore a crossbeam of bamboo a yard long and quite three inches in diameter. From this transverse bar or seat, fastened to either side of the cliff, long loose cords hung, by which to pull the slip-loop back and forth. tried the cable. It seemed firm and the sliploop was also quite secure. He breathed a sigh of relief, and divesting himself of his silverweighted gown, he put on again only his sheepskin coat, and unloaded the treasure from the yak. He made it into a bundle which he fastened to his back by slipping his arms into loops of cord left for the purpose, and it was further steadied by a strap which passed around his forehead. He thrust his rosarv and knife into the bosom of his coat. and then secreted his robe behind a rock. His purpose was to carry the bulk of the treasure across first, hide it, then return for his garment and the remains of the tsamba, leaving the "Old Noble" to find his way down to the valleys as best he could.

He seated himself on the transverse bar, gathered up the loose cord, and clutched firmly the notch of the slip-loop. moment, he hesitated, - just for a moment, as he inadvertently glanced over the edge of the cliff, and realized how fearful was the distance beneath him. Then, with an exclamation that was almost a shout of triumph, he kicked the side of the rocky projection, as a child kicks the ground to start a swing, and slid down into space. His weight and the heavy load he carried caused the bamboo cable tosag so far that he received a splendid impetus, and with a feeling of glorious exhilaration, as though he were flying to his love through the air, he had slipped, almost before he knew it, more than half the distance of the cable. It was perfect travelling, the way he had been travelling in his heart the whole distance, but his progress was stopped now by the steep dip of the cable from the opposite bank. What had been an advantage in his descent was a double disadvantage in his ascent.

However, swaying there in space, carefully fixing his eyes on the opposite cliff, he began steadily to haul on the slack of the loose rope by which he was to pull himself along the cable up to the cliff. He gathered the cord all up until it was taut, letting superfluous length dangle beneath him, where it looked like a gossamer blown idly in the wind. Then he began steadily to pull. This part was difficult because he could no longer cling to the crotch of the loop above him, but required both hands to haul himself up the incline. Slowly, with all his strength, he pulled. The slip-loop, on account of the weight dependent from it, moved reluctantly along the cable, and his progress upwards was almost impercepti-Ascend he did, however, and breathless and perspiring he realized that nearly half of the remaining distance had been covered.

He was getting fearfully fatigued, as he could not let the rope become slack for asingle moment while he rested, otherwise he would slide back again, so he was compelled to cling with all his strength, to maintain the position won. A giddiness he did not like assailed him, too, for a sickening moment. The dreaded Poison of the Pass! Was it to attack him now? If so, his fate was too hideous to contemplate! Startled by the thought, he exerted himself for a mighty effort, and put forth all his force in a tremendous pull. He felt the loop slide grudgingly upward,——and then——

Something snapped, and he A shock! was clutching madly at a loose and flying rope that offered no resistance. He felt himself sliding down, down, with fearful rapidity. as he whirled wildly round and round, and swaved from side to side. Almost insensible. hugging the pendant loop, which he had been lucky enough to grasp in his first frantic clutch, from sheer instinct, gripping with all the power of his muscular legs the rope that passed up between his thighs, he hung there, quite at the mercy, in his dizzy helplessness, of the whirling swaying thing that threatened every moment to fling him, hurtling down to a frightful death.

At length, and it seemed to him hours, the force of the momentum acquired by the sudden slide dissipated itself, and the man and the swing hung almost still, only swaying a little as shudder after shudder shook the man's body. At last his nerve centers had been disturbed, and he was racked with chills that chattered his teeth, and threatened to fairly dismember him. He had been too

dull, too clod-like, too undeveloped to ever know physical fear before, and now he threatened to collapse utterly in the extremity of this peril.

His first conscious realization of himself, after he had clung there some time, was that he was repeating over and over, with quivering lips, the mystic words, "Om Mani Padme Hum", in the intervals of violent His situation was so appalling, vomiting. and his sickness was so acute, that he began to cry, miserably and feebly, like a sick child. The truth was that Pa-o's reason was trem bling on the verge, and if his had been a finer nervous organization, he must have gone quite mad, and have hurled himself down the two or three thousand feet beneath him.

Finally, the sickness ceased, and he began to struggle to get himself in hand. His first thought was to return to the side he had left, but after some feeble fruitless gropings with his feet, for the hauling rope from that side, the fear assailed him that perhaps that rope might also break. He knew he could not live through another experience of that sort, so he gave up the idea, and tried to concentrate his energies on evolving some way of escaping his present predicament.

The weight of his body and his load caused the bamboo cable to sag alarmingly in a way that added to his panic, and he hastened to rid himself of the precious treasure he had risked so much to save. He asked now, of the gods, only his life!

Cautiously loosening his clasp of the loop, and scarcely daring to breathe, he felt with one trembling hand inside his bosom for his knife. It was there, the god of luck be praised! He withdrew it carefully, and severed first the strap that held the pack to his forehead, and then slowly and gently cut the loop through which his right arm was passed.

Every movement made his dangling seat sway sickeningly, and he was drenched with sweat. He finally succeeded in slipping his left arm out of the loop, and the bundle of wealth which was to realize all his hopes and dreams dropped like a plummet beneath him.

The elastic cable, relieved of half the strain on it, tightened itself, and once more the hapless creature was nearly shaken off his precarious perch. A long rest was necessary after this effort, and then Pa-o prepared himself for his last final attempt to cross. A grunt from the forsaken yak, his trusted old friend, roused him again to life and effort.

He had unconsciously clung to the broken hauling rope, and had tucked it in his girdle while he was relieving himself of the pack. Now, he cautiously withdrew it, and cutting off a length of it, he made a loop which he passed around his body under his arms. Holding the end of it in his teeth, he slowly raised himself until he stood upright on the Clinging to the cable seat of the swing. with his left hand, with his right he tied himself as securely as he could to the slip-loop. Again he had to rest, and it was a face ashen gray with fear and hopelessness, from which red eyes bulged horridly, that he turned up in supplication to the serene Thibetan sky.

Gathering courage for the effort that was to decide his fate, muttering with dry mouth and stiff lips, the constant prayer, he proceeded to work his way, hand over hand along the cable, resting every third movement or so, on the bar, clinging in the last agony of desperation with hands, with knees, with teeth, to anything that would give him hold, to prevent himself from sliding back again. At times, he was obliged to lift himself off the bar with one hand, and hang suspended, while with the other he moved the pulley over a rough place in the rope, which impeded its advance.

How many times it seemed that he must give up, he never knew himself. How many times the rope which bound him to the slip-loop was really all that held him there, he could not tell. But at last, success was his. He reached the end of that seemingly interminable cable, and with a joy that was almost madness, he knew that a few inches beneath his feet, was earth, solid earth, and not that awful depth of empty sunlit space.

He could not, however, bring himself to let go the cable, until he had worked himself quite up to the point from which it was suspended. This was a great log driven into the earth some distance from the edge of the cliff, and buried beneath a heap of rocks; so that when he finally slipped his feet off the bar and cut the rope which tied him to the slip-loop, he was quite safe.

Without stopping, without looking back at the faithful waiting yak and the rest of his treasure, he rushed,—he stumbled,—he fell along the path until a huge boulder shut off from his sight all possible view of the awful abyss he had crossed. Then, at last, weak, trembling, with arms almost torn from their sockets, and crying again like a child, he flung himself flat down upon the earth,

clinging to the ground desperately, digging into it madly, with fingers bleeding, fleshless, and nailless, and seeking to hide his straining eyeballs in the bosom of the earth.

The Lama sat on the earthen floor of the Black Cavern. His fine keen face was bent over a manuscript which was spread out on the low table before him. He had been poring over it for months and had succeeded in deciphering nearly all of the curious old characters.

Many years ago the Lama had come to the cave from Lhasa to take advantage of the year's retirement in the forest allowed each Buddhist priest. He was young then, the the burning pastilles scarcely healed on his smoothly shaven scalp. belonged to the Ge-luk-pa sect, as evidenced by his yellow cap, but his philosophy was more transcendental and his theology purer, while his ardour of devotion was far greater, than that of his companions, so he was hardly genuine Lamaist so much as Buddhist of an exceptionally pure type. Absorbed in study, struggling with Karma, he led for many long years a life of peace in this cavern, which, half way up a hill-side, looked across a valley

to the mountains towering opposite. He had chosen his dwelling well—"back to the hill"—a lake in the prospect, and op posite, the grand procession of mountains shouldering their way with regal ice-crowned heads, up into the blue of the Thibetan sky.

Slowly and shyly on the little plateau below the holy man's cave, the tiny village of P'ug-nak had grown up, and in the many years the priest had sat above them, the inhabitants had worn a path up to his dwelling, carrying their humble offerings. Tea, tsamba, churraa—anything except flesh food was welcome to the gentle priest, and the humble donor always went away with a comforting blessing or words of good counsel.

He had watched the children grow up, marry, and beget children of their own. He had assisted at all their rites and ceremonies; had married them; and had prepared their dead for "burial" in the bodies of the snow vultures which came obediently to their grim work. So great was his continual holiness, that all malignant demons were exorcised, and only kindly spirits hovered in the neighbourhood of the protected village. It was the boast of the men of P'ug-Nak to their neighbours in the adjacent valleys, that never

a Shrimpo had devoured one of their number when they went down to the valley to attend their herds, though there were many great boulders at the foot of the hill, which, as every one knew, were eminently fitted for the dwellings of these bloodthirsty demons. And the Lha-min, those evil spirits continually at war with all things spiritual, had long since retired in disgust, weary of waging a hopeless war against perfect virtue.

Yet the priest knew that his virtue was not perfect. Still in his heart he held desire — desire of life — desire of love the lusts of the eye—and mortify the flesh to the utmost as he did, these would not die: and he mourned to know that these desires, smothered in his soul though they were, were begetting Karma for him, and that other incarnations must be reserved for his He mourned as he saw himself endurance. bound to the wheel of change through countless ages, and he marvelled as he realized in himself and in the wretched villagers at his feet, the force of this desire for life.

To him, no thought was so beautiful, no gift to be so wooed as the idea of the ceasing of all things—the absolute rest in deliverence from existence. This was his one

absorbing thought, his one hope. Each day saw him glad, at its close, that it had slipped into the past, like a bead dropped on the rosary string, to mark a prayer that is said. Each day, done, led him so much nearer the much end—so nearer to the time deliverence, when this phase should finished, and he would rest awhile the spiritual night, before his Devachan, before taking up again the next and he was carrying in the chain link He prayed, he hoped, existence. he lived, to make those links few-to bring the time of entering in to the Nirvana close to him.

Yet must he realize that in the heart of his heart, there lurked still the germ that he could not eradicate—the love of living; and why it endured, he could not understand. His soul craved rest,—extinction,—but his body cried, "Live!"—in spite of the narrow colorless existence which was all it had ever known of life. No existence could hold less of joy or less of hope than his, and his people's. True, his poverty, his austerity, his asceticism were his from choice, while their poverty, squalor, and misery were perforce of cruel circumstance.

He wondered, as he watched, year after year, their unresting struggle for mere daily subsistence, wrung by suffering and heartbreaking toil from the icy bosom of their cruel land, why, demon-tormented as they were in their superstition, they did not, as soon as they reached an age of comprehension, put an end to it all, in some simple method of suicide.

That solution was not possible for him, in the light of his knowledge of the after fate of suicides, and in the face of his conviction of the inexorability of Karma. He knew he had debts to pay, phases to work out, if not in this existence, then in the next, or the next. And yet he confessed that it was not this knowledge that made him continue to live. It was the same mere instinctive clinging to life that forced these human vermin to exist.

Sitting opposite the figure of the next Redeemer, Maitreya, the coming Buddha, turning his prayer-barrel, the while he unconsciously listened to the fluttering of the strips of paper within, all marked "Om Mani Padme Hum", the Lama often reviewed the events of his little world. And many timeshe wondered as to the result of Pa-o's under

taking. He saw him go gaily forth on hislong journey to Peking, and knowing the youth's real skill at his work, he did not doubt but that he would receive proper recognition. He smiled indulgently as he thought of T'uk-mar's pleasure, should the youth return, but he wondered rather sadly whether she would be able to withstand much longer the pressure brought to bear upon her to marry a wealthy farmer in a neighboring. valley. The farmer was already worrying T'uk-mar's father to send the girl to him for the customary months of trial before the actual marriage ceremony should take place. She, with surprising obstinacy, refused to go, and the indolent old Thibetan, her father, had so far let the girl have her own way. was ambitious. It was even whispered that he would be the next headman of the village, and a prosperous marriage for his daughter would assist in his advancement. So it was that the Lama knew right well which of the gods were to be propitiated when T'uk-mar brought to him her "Torma"——a poor little cone of tsamba, butter, treacle and sugar, made by herself, and humbly offered to appease the Tsen and Gek, demons that she knew were lurking on mountain paths and valley roads to bring disaster on her traveller. As for the villagers, if they ever thought of Pa-o at all, they had long since decided that, having found a good chance in China, he probably had too much good sense to return to the snows and labor of P'ug-Nak.

Only T'uk-mar knew that he would come back.

When the return actually occured, it was at sunset one evening, as T'uk-mar was squattting on the ground outside her father's hut, manipulating a little heap of yak-dung, to prepare it for fuel. Suddenly she saw a bent and tattered figure climbing up the slope to the little plateau. Ragged, dirty beyond even her dreams of dirt; haggard, with swollen cracked lips and elf-locks almost white hanging over his face,—it needed all her love to tell her that this was Pa-o,—returned he who had set forth not two years ago, stalwart and jaunty, to get a fortune for them both.

She ran to him, driving off the big mastiffs, who with deep bell-tones, proclaimed him strange and therefore hostile, and threw her arm around him to support him to his own hut. The poor room, so long untenanted, was cold and cheerless, and after she had settled him on the k'ang, T'uk-mar ran across to her own house, to tell the news and to fetch tea and a jar of glowing coals.

Very soon the whole village had gathered around the hut, as many as possible crowding inside, and Pa-o had to tell them all his story, from the arrival at Peking (and many incredulous "wa's" greeted his statement of the price his wares brought!) the fearful recital of the suspension bridge, and his subsequent wanderings, half demented, until he almost stumbled on the village. His return was an event to celebrate, so children were despatched to the different huts for tea, dried meat, twisted biscuit, or whatever else they might find for food. "Chang" was freely dispensed, drink-horns loaned and exchanged, tsamba bowls produced from the breasts of robes, and so great was the excitement, that even the Lama was coaxed down from his cell, and seated, on some one's saddle-bags, by Pa-o's side on the k'ang. The wonderful tale had to be repeated over and over again, and the marvelling increased, until finally one inquisitive youth was felt to have voiced the general sentiment, when he asked:

"But why, then, did you return at all, from Peking?"

Pa-o's eyes had been constantly following T'uk-mar, as she flitted about, ladling tea into the pot from the big bowl on the fire, or adding generous lumps of butter to cups already served. He watched her silently a moment, then answered quietly,

T'uk-mar was here."

A shout of laughter greeted this, and much coarse jesting followed. T'uk-mar, trying to avoid observation as much aspossible, tollowed her father out of the hut, The old man cast the remains of his tea in the slop-bowl by the door, to indicate that his visit was ended, and stalked away, not sparing of his scorn at Pa-o's presumption. The Lama was the last to leave, and as he watched Pa-o trying to make himself comfortable on the unwarmed k'ang, he contemplated him thoughtfully, and asked, too, as he left the room:

"Why, indeed did you return?"

The next day, provided with a white silk scarf of ceremony, Pa-o called formally on T'uk-mar's father, and asked for his daughter's hand. The old man's disdain was dissipated by a sight of the kingfisherfeather ornament. Its beauty and value caused him to regard Pa-o as a son-in-law to be considered seriously. No girl outside of Lhasa had such an ornament, and its worth seemed to corroborate Pa-o's story of what he could sell his work for, now that he had established direct relations with Peking.

"I rebuke my soul that I seemed not to believe your story last night", he said, politely offering Pa-o some thick tsambaporridge out of his own venerable fingers. Pa-o knew that this was equal to the most solemn of paternal blessings, and his heart leaped at the thought that in a few days, she, dowered with clothes and cattle, would be given to him forever—his cherished "Turquoise!"

III.

The Lama after his months of labor, had at length deciphered, and made a fair copy in Thibetan, of the ancient manuscript. His pale face shone white against the background of the Black Cavern like an ivory carving against black lacquer, as he bent his head to read:—

"In the early morning of the world, Brahma, in his idleness caught up a handful of cosmic dust, and kneaded it. It slipped from his grasp, rolled over the edge of heaven, and plunged on an endless way into the abysses of space. For a second, the great God regretted his misadventure, and wished his toy back in his hand again. Obedient to the thought the now incandescent ball rolled back heaven-wards; but, a moment later, indifferent, he let it go from his mind.

A moment's thought of the gods, however, is the measure of an aeon of time—and in the dropping, the momentary recalling, and the subsequent dismissal from his mind, Brahma fixed forever the orbit of that seething ball of dust.

Brahma looked at Saraswatî, to receive her smile of gentle chiding for his habitual clumsiness. The glory of her beauty smote him, as always, afresh. He gathered up more dust, and with experimental fingers, tried to mould a counterpart of her in little. Trial after trial was put down in despair. Her beauty, her glory, could not be caught or counterfeited. In petulence, he formed a clumsy caricature of himself, and found it good. So, quite eagerly, he set about making many Finally the were nearly surrounded as they sat by the little mannikins which lay rigid and inanimate onthe floor of Heaven.

Brahma yawned, and leaned over to put his head in Saraswati's lap; but, bending too near the mannikins, his breath warmed them into life, and blinded and dazed by the glory of heaven, they staggered to their feet, living creatures.

Aghast at the result of his trifling, Brahma gathered them up in his lap, and looked at Saraswatî. She shrugged her shoulders, as disclaiming any responsibility. He pondered for an instant, and there was silence in heaven. The roar of whirling worlds hummed unheeded in their accustomed ears, while Brahma pondered.

Suddenly, at the thithermost edge of space, appeared a new, bright object, and Brahma rememberd the globe he had lately fashioned, During the aeons of his moments, the glowing mass had cooled, slowly changes had occurred, and now, as it approached, following unchangingly the orbit fixed by his fleeting thought, he saw that it was a green and smiling world.

A solution of his difficulty occurred to Brahma. Leaning out from heaven, he gently deposited the mannikins on the orb as it rolled by, and watched with pleasure, the little world, with its little moon, go

whirling off into the void.

That disposed of, Brahma yawned again, and lolling at ease, put his head in Saraswati's lap.

Brahma slept.

When the gods sleep, then is the time of cataclysms, Much was happening on the little earth. Formed in a caprice, peopled in a perplexity, things went not well with it.

At first, with the memory of the glory of heaven fresh in their minds, the mannikins waited, expectantly, until they should be restored to their place on the lap of Brahma. Time ticked its centuries away in Saraswatî's inattentive ear, but on earth, they counted days. Each day had many hours, and each hour had sixty dragging minutes to be lived through.

While Brahma slept, the people waited. It was long before they accepted it, but finally the realization came—that they were forgotten, that nothing was to change for them.

Years passed, decades passed, centuries passed, and with nothing to hope for, nothing to look forward to, desperation at the weary monotony of their existence took possession of them. At first, before the beautiful memory of their origin had quite

faded from their minds in a fever of effort, they wearied themselves in building lofty towers, by means of which they strove to climb again to the high place they had been cast out of; but the earth held them inexorably. Finally, after a long time, the beatific memory lost forever, deep despair settled upon these hapless victims of a god's caprice.

The endless days ground on, and time was a wearisome succession of light and darkness, revealing nothing, hiding nothing. Ever and anon, one man or woman, more oppressed than the others by the meaningless burden of life, would run mad, and by violence and bloodshed, vainly seek an escape from this slavery which they could neither endure nor understand. Or another, forsaking his fellows, would hide in some cell alone, and, subsisting upon the fruits which the earth in her first flush of motherhood, provided so lavishly, would wait—and wait—for what?

Brahma slept on, and Saraswatî sat, fondling his resting head. Eternal joy was theirs.

In shifting her position slightly, Saraswatt could see the earth more plainly, as once

again it rolled along the line of the god's recalling thought. The aura was bad. A dull mist encompassed the sphere, the emanations of despair, of hopelessness, of violence and hatred. Remembering that it had pleased Brahma in the fashioning, she felt concern. It was only justice that help be given.

Gently kissing Brahma's forehead, she awoke him and showed him his toy. Perplexity wrinkled his brow. Inquiringly he looked at her, and spread out his hands, to show his helpless indecision.

With a wise little nod of her head, Saraswatî plucked a shining jewel from the heart of a lotus, which in perpetual offering to their god-heads, grew before her. It was like a rose in color, and glittered with so wonderful a fire, that it blazed dazzlingly, even in the rainbow radiance of the Hall of Heaven. Crushing the jewel in her hand, she reduced it to a sparkling dust, which she was about to scatter over the earth, when for an instant, she paused,—and remembering fleeting time, and facing immutable eternity, her compassion grew greater. Into the glittering mass, she crushed the blood-like sap out of a petal from the lotus, having care that

each sparkling atom got its tiny drop of dew.

Leaning over the edge of the Universe, she threw the mannikins into a deep sleep, and while they slept, she gathered them up into her lap, and gently anointed their eyes—and smiled as she dropped them back to earth, thinking of their awakening.

Awake they finally did, as from oblivion, and remembering nothing of their sleep, took up again the heavy burden of life. But, strangely, they realized at once that it was no longer a burden. Gladly and gaily they went about their tasks, working light-heartedly, rejoicing in effort, and planning new achievements. And—looking into each other's eyes, man and woman, they found what they had lost so long, the light of the glory of heaven.

Brahma watched amazed. These creatures actually rejoiced in work, and could be happy in the face of suffering. They held festivals, they danced with garlands about them, and vine-leaves in their hair. They married, they fondled little children, they sang praises to him, and worshipped him! He heard them, in amazement, calling him "Creator," and thanking him for the in-

estimable boon of life. They made images of themselves, bigger and more magnificent, which they called "God," and "Brahma," even as he had made them as images of himself in little.

And he saw that finally, when, one by one, they tired and lay down to a long rest, they went peacefully, even gladly, because they carried in their hearts the hope that they would enter again the Hall of Heaven, and abide forever on the bosom of God.

In utter bewilderment, Brahma turned to Saraswatî.

"What is it?" he asked. "What did you do?"

Saraswati smiled inscrutably, and remembering how he hung upon her appreciation and approval of his smallest action, how every moment he needed her, and the perfect happy confidence in which he slept at her side, answered:—

"I gave them love."

And, again looking out across the fathomless void of space, and with eyes perhaps slightly wearied, facing immutable eternity, she added——

"I gave them death!"

The priest dropped the manuscript, and looked across the valley to the eternal snow-clad hills.

A song like the murmuring of Dri-sa's to their gossamer guitars, floated up to him. It was Pa-o, singing in the sunset to his bride.

"Rare, art thou, as costly coral tree,

O, my love!

With leaf of lucent jade, and fruit of pearls,

And tender bud of gleaming turqoise blue,

"A Jewel, thou, to wear above my heart."

"Fluttering like a turquoise butter-fly, O,my love!

I follow thee, or loiter in thy path.

Thou little Rose, whose fragrance Drisa's sup,

I fain would creep within thy golden heart."

The hum of the busy village, the bleating of sheep, the grunting of yaks, the cry of a child—all the myriad noises made by its sordid struggling life, were carried up to him with the odor of yak-dung smoke. The priest pictured the inside of their huts, the filth, the poverty. He thought of T'uk-mar, of her greasy hair, in its four or five dozen

tiny plaits pinned up in a cloth bag between her shoulders — plaits that were nests of vermin! He saw her face with the high cheek-bones, narrow eves, brown skin smeared over with darker brown paint; her slovenly single garment, belted about her thick waist with a strap, and all the other unlovely details of the wretched little creature's being. reflected upon her daily life; --- the slip-shod house-keeping ---- a tsamba bowl licked out to save washing; the preparation of yak-dung for fuel; the cleansing of the entrails of slain sheep; the kneading of tsamba-dough and tea with hands never washed between one occupation and the next; the grinding of parched barley for tsamba meal, in the same vessel used for her rare ablutions. His sensitive, ascetic soul shrank in horror. He thought of her life as maid, and what it would be as matron. She might be the wife of two or three husbands at once ——the slave of Pa-o, and the others, who would brutally beat her; spending her time between grinding toil for them and pandering to their lusts; finding her pleasure in stupefied intoxication from "chang", and gorging her appetite on heavy and disgusting morsels of the corpses of slain beasts; bearing children in disease

and dirt, to grow up to live a life like hers—and finding her greater honor in the greater number of the wretched little creatures she could propogate.

That was she, to whom Pa-o had come back.

Pa-o, lazy brute, slovenly drunkard, animal revelling in filth, stupid clod, too primitive even to fear, had been transformed into a hero, a demi—god! He had trampled romorselessly upon the humanities, he had suffered and starved, he had faced, grandly, perils so dreadful that one could scarcely live and hear them told—to climb mountains esteemed impassable, and to lay his last treasure and his life at the naked unwashed feet of filthy little T'uk-mar.

These things the priest had gropingly felt before, and had wondered what the magic was, before he read; but now as he heard that Pa-o could look at T'uk-mar, and see her only as:—

"Thou little rose, whose fragrance Dri-sa's sup",

He bent his head in comprehension.

As the song was wafted up to him with the fragrant juniper smoke burning below in the evening sacrifice, the priest felt again the gnawing yearning, which he knew in his heart to be the desire of life and love.

"They saw in each other's eyes, what they had lost so long—the light of the glory of heaven!"

Turning the prayer-wheel quickly, his starved heart whispered, "I understand O Perfect One! The jewel in the Lotus! It is love — I understand!"



Little Mertens had been having a somewhat noisy, and unquestionably expensive time in various capitals of Europe, for some years after his majority when it occured to his parents that it would be well to look into the affairs of their young hopeful. Of course, matters might have been worse, but it seemed to them drastic measures were necessary, when they found him something like a hundred thousand francs in debt to sundry members of the Lost Tribes, and besides, hopelessly enamored of a certain Miss Wolf, who presided over a champagne bar in a very popular part of Vienna.

She was really an awfully nice girl, daughter of an estimable shoemaker of the III Bezirk, Landstrasse, and had undoubtedly a remarkable figure and head of hair. In all probability, she would have made an excellent wife for Little Mertens, as he stoutly maintained

against all comers, (in the form of horrified parents, uncles, and other interested relatives) but there were one or two trifling indiscretions in her past, not wholly unconnected with Austrian officers, which, while bearing high testimony to her amiability and popularity, Mertens pere et mere could not find it possible to overlook.

So, to get him out of harm's way, and to deliver him from temptation, Merten was shipped out to China, consigned to an elder brother, who did important things in the Legation Quarter in Peking.

As every one knows who has been there, China, in any part, is one of the best reformatories in the world. No one ever drinks too much; no one is ever known to gamble; as for taking an undue and illegitimate interest in one's neighbour's wife, such a thing is as unknown as a mesalliance. The people at home are inclined to think it is something in the climate, or in the purifying influence of the Confucian doctrine, and with touching confidence, ship out there, persons who have done all these things to excess in Europe, and America, sure that they will be able to work out a reform in China—the Treaty Ports being especially recommended.

Little Mertens, however, had small apportunity to enjoy the beneficial effects of a sojourn at a Treaty Port, being hurried North in pursuit of a wholly imaginary "duty", which explained to the world hispresence in the Legation where his brother was so bright an ornament.

Autumn found him installed in his quarters, ostensibly in command of a guard; but the guard was so infinitesimal that little imagined himself Mertens often in the position of the "cook and crew, and theboatswain too" of the hapless "Nancy Bell." He struggled manfully enough, however, todrive away the spectre of boredom which loomed always just before him, and threw himself with ardour into his alleged work and into the mild amusements of a Peking winter. He was a gentle, affectionate little chap, with a strong instinct for nest-building, and his parents ought, before the episode of the champagne bar, to have led him gently to the altar with a modest maiden of his own rank. and have settled them quietly on one of the numerous parental estates.

The tender heart of little Mertens had been touched by the Viennese blonde—who really was an awfully nice girl—and so,...

after he read all his brother's novels, and all those in the club library; and having concluded that riding Chinese ponies over frozen or snow-covered ground wasn't all it was popularly supposed to be; and having further reflected that the most gorgeous of Legation balls, and even the great similar events at the club, did not compare in a markedly favorable manner with the functions he had attended at home; he subsided into a settled melancholy, and began to think seriously of suicide.

An old resident, who'd been through it all, and knew the only salvation for an exile in Peking, suggested one day, that little Mertens go in for things Chinese. The old resident had an interest in the nice boy and saw with some alarm, the growing attraction of the club bar.

"Get a teacher", he explained. "Don't dig, necessarily, because, of course, it's a frightful language if you go in for the reading and writing. You need a brain like a godown, if you're going to do that—not, of course, reflecting on the capacity of your brain-pan, my boy; But just learn to talk to the people, and you'll find a great deal more to interest you outside of the Quarter, than

there is in it, I assure you!"

Little Mertens, in despair, took the old resident's advice, and the upshot of his story, if the truth had ever been known, might have, in this one case, curbed the fatal propensity which old residents have, everywhere, for lavishly distributing advice.

The teacher secured described himself as a "since interpreter" of a foreign hospital, who supplemented the income thus obtained, by giving lessons to various youths in a like case with Mertens. He was a dignified Chinese, much given to wearing creamy yellow brocaded coats, which formed a pleasing contrast to his seamed mahogany countenance. He took a fatherly interest in little Mertens, at thirty dollars, Mex., per month, and piloted him all through the dirt and mystery of the old, mysterious capital.

Under his tutelage, little Mertens was glutted with temples—Taoist, Buddhist, Lamaist and Confucian. He was beguiled into expending large sums in the Liu-li-chang for books and curios; he was personally conducted to sinister opium dens, which he found disappointingly commonplace, and to dim and smelly restaurants, where he was made to eat unanalyzed but toothsome

messes—with his teeth on tip-toe, in protest the filth which he knew was there, though he could neither see nor taste it. So, altogether, the days of winter passed pleasantly enough intospring, and little Mertens, having become able to converse haltingly with grave shop-keepers and polite officials, began to fancy himself as a sinologue, and talked learnedly of this, that, or the other man's faulty method of transliteration.

It was just about this time that little Mertens' story really commenced.

He was strolling one day, in tow of the interpreter", through the courts "since large Taoist of Temple enclosure. laughing been had indulgently. at the horrors depicted in effigy, which awaited all evil-doing Taoists. He had finally grown tired of seeing tortured and defunct Taoists, led by their own entrails by energetic demons, to be judged by placid wooden magistrates, whose fatuous white faces gazed far away, over the heads of the helpless effigies, and as far over the heads of the devout Chinese, who were solemnly banging their foreheads on the floor before these callous monsters.

Leaving the three or four score magistrates of heaven and hell, they took their way through the gaily-dressed throng of holiday-makers, en route to a pavilion in the rear, where a bronze horse stood. This steed enjoyed a great reputation, and a permanent polish, secured very simply. Any afflicted Chinese desirous of ridding himself of an ailment, had only to rub the part of the horse corresponding to the especial part of his own anatomy, where his trouble was located, and recovery immediately followed. The horse was a shining testimonial of the efficacy of faith and massage.

As they went through a gate, little Mertens' attention was attracted by the singular proceedings of two women. The older one of the two walked slowly by the side of the young one, a mere girl, who, clothed in most sumptuous satins, was taking two measured steps, and then falling upon her knees to knock her head on the paving stones of the court. Her forehead was quite gray with dust.

Little Mertens turned inquiringly to his preceptor. "She finishes to swear", the latter explained, lucidly enough, speaking his version of the tongue of Mertens, that the young devotee might not be embarassed by hearing herself discussed." "She is being ill," he continued, scorning "pidgin," and picking his parts of speech with care, "she have swear to come to enter this temple, and to make kow-tow, till she is came to the bronze horse, if the spirits have allow her to become health."

This explanation was entirely satisfactory, and Mertens watched indulgently the serious little girl, now plump and round in renewed health, as she put up her folded hands before her face, in the universal attitude of prayer, took her two steps, and then solemnly performed her kow-tow. Young, she was, her smooth face proved, and maiden still, as all the world could see by the arrangement of her hair, which, all combed over to the left side of her head, was coiled smoothly over her ear, and ornamented with flowers and pearls.

"Satin", little Mertens thought. "That's just the word to express her. Satin clothes, satin skin! and sweetly pretty! Good, too, and pious. The first Chinese woman I've seen, who——I say, Hsien Sheng, who is she, do you suppose?"

"I do not know", said the Hsien Sheng,

or "elder born", virtuously, "but the old woman is actress."

"Aha!" said Mertens, taking a second look at the duenna. True enough, there was a little look about her, which recalled an elderly friend of the champagne goddess, who had also been described to Mertens as an "actress"——retired. Mertens knew, of course, that there were no actresses in North China, and that his mentor had merely used a figure of speech.

"Where does she live?" the young man enquired. That the Hsien Sheng was hurt at being supposed to know, was plainly evident in his whole bearing, which stiffened perceptibly, while his lips pursed themselves piously.

"I do not know," he replied. "But there is friend of me, which may inform us."

"Alright," said Mertens, "send along your friend, old chap!"

The next day, the friend came—an oily, unctuous individual, with fat eyelids and a white mouth, who seemed well adapted to taking matters of delicacy in to his damp, yellow-nailed hands.

The upshot of the matter was, that, on

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The fisher interpreter for the Mertens. The fisher interpreter for the young man, a Chinese palace, belonging formerly to the Viceroy of a certain province, who had by special invitation of the Empress Downger, taken a somewhat extended trip into Turkestan, to everlook affairs there. In other words, he had been banished, sine die, and his

impoverished family had been glad to clear out of the mansion, and rent it for a good round sum to Mertens.

Little Mertens installed the girl there, gave here carte blanche as to its arrangement, and began once more to be happy. marvellous head of hair of the nymph of the champagne bar faded to a nebulous haze in his memory, and he wondered how he could ever have admired anything but smooth black tresses, which, unbound, covered a little white body like a satin robe; or which, done high at the back of a graceful head, a la Manchu, made a most effective background for a serious face whose placid calm was only broken occasionally when a witching smile would flash perfect teeth at him, and tuck the curled corner of a red lip into the fascinating little dimple world—and all this happened only when Mertens deigned to joke with his most devoted and faithful servant.

The summer sped past, and it seemed to little Mertens that it consisted entirely of still, heated days, drenched in yellow sunlight, which were passed in the cool of a stone verandah, or of white nights, so glorious with moonlight, that they were almost lighter

than the glaring day. Did the sun shine always, he wondered aftewards? there really no dust storms, no rains, no raw spring days, before the breathless summer? Summer gave place to the brief glorious autumn of the North, and soon grip land was in the iron of Winter slipped into spring, again, almost before Mertens had ceased buying furs for the little woman, and still the life did not pall upon him.

In his palace, with its many pavilions scattered about the paved courtyards, with the dirt and turmoil of the wretched town kept out by an eighteen-foot wall, whose green-tiled top made the line of their horizon, little Mertens, living almost entirely Chinese fashion, with the quiet satiny little creature who was his companion, flattered himself that he had found contentment. Over his gateway, were written the Chinese characters for, "In the midst of peace", and sitting upon the roof of a summer—house in their garden, with a huge heavy moon pouring light down upon them, little Mertens, with quiet happiness, dwelt sometimes, in reminescent wonder, on the noisy and expensive time that he had counted pleasure at home.

His facility in the language improved He found keen interest in exploring a mind entirely fresh and original, which looked at things from a diametrically different point of view from his, or that of any Western intelligence. He liked her retiring modesty and perfect courtesy, and he loved to hear her prattling in her simple way about the daily events of their life, and the great things which had happened to her, since that day in the temple garden. It pleased him, when she took his name, and added "Ta-jen", "excellency" to the first syllable, (pronounced prettily "May", with the impossible "R" left out,) and so built him the title, "Mei Ta-jen". She told him "Mei" meant "plum". and that he was his excellency, the Great Plum, as she was, "Hsiao Mei", the Little Plum.

The club bar saw him no more. His nest-building instinct was being indulged to the fullest. Fellows knew if they wanted to see him, outside of "duty" hours, they must follow a devious way through obscure lanes, until they came to a gate marked as a prince's by two stone lions, and there behind the red walls, Mertens reigned supreme. All of his associates, sure of an expansive

welcome out of the plenitude of Mertens' happiness, had come to meet, and had grown to like, the soft little bit of femininity, who made the domestic wheels run so smoothly: and who, on summer nights, sitting by her lord's side would keep them enthralled by her recitals of tales of the old, old times---the days of the glorious Mings, the song-days of the T'angs, the martial life of the Hans. Those who could not understand the languaalways went home, determined buckle-to, and learn the "Beastly Chinese," if only to be able to understand the stories "Mei Tai-tai" told.

And the girl? Young, ignorant of the world, carefully sheltered and nourished all her young life—preserved, it is true, rather than cherished, and not from worthy motives, but to make her fetch more in the market, how fared it with her? So much superfine merchandise, she had been handed over to the highest bidder, a dreaded foreigner whom she had never seen and from whom she knew not what to expect. At first, timidity itself, she had trembled at every cry of the gate-keeper—"Mei Ta-jen arrives!"—but after she knew him better, her fear ceased, and her life began to have its advantages. Plenty of

clothes, — Mertens dressed her always in satins of soft blue and gray shades——plenty of servants and money, there was seemingly no shadow of care in her life.

Softly she walked all her days, spending her time in ordering the household, and in practicing her lute, and the foreign mandolin Mei Ta-jen had given her, out of which she could pick some dainty airs with her ivory plectrum. Always gentle, always amiable, smoking her silver water-pipe through long hours of idleness while Mertens was away, her life flowd on as quietly/\as the little stream took its sluggish course around the marble boat in their rearmost courtyard.

And yet——! Ah yes, there was a "yet"! She had two sources of unhappiness. She lived in constant dread of the time when Mei Ta-jen should go back to that mysterious country he and his friends called "Home, whither all the foreign devils finally went, and she, left behind, should be handed over again, to the tender mercies of her mother.

And she did not care for Mei-Ta-jen. In spite of his kindness, in spite of the luxurious life he gave her she could not love him, and she did love with all the still

deep ardor of her hidden heart, one of her own race. She had seen him many times at temple fairs before the days of Mei Ta-jen, and there had been looks exchanged which said more than the words they were forbidden to utter to each other. She did not know who he was, but he knew her antecedents, probably, and evidently preferred not to take her to wife, or perhaps could not pay the high price her mother put upon her, as concubine.

After her disposal to Mertens, in the unrestrained life he allowed her, she much time roaming about Peking with her Looking into a tea-shop, one day, she saw him——the man of her dreams. This, then, was his place of business,this old, dark, fragrant place, which for two or three hundred years had been handed down from father to son. The shop stood "Outside Hata-men," in the Chinese city, not far from the walls of the Tartar City within which she lived. A European would have raved over the rich carving of the upper half of the shop front, and would have gone into ecstacies over the polished lacquer door-posts, and the heavy teak counter and shelves, all made in the old days when workmen were

honest——a golden, if somewhat apochryphal time, from which date all of China's masterpieces.

She, however, accustomed to all these things, saw only the man. Quietly, and in her self-possessed way, she stopped the cart, got out with her maid, and went into the shop. For all her composed manner, her heart beat in her throat, and her head whirled, as she seated herself on the high stool, and waited to be served. All her life, after, the scent of stored tea, the heavy perfume of jasmine and orange flowers, used in the Pekoe chops, recalled that one supreme moment, when at last, face to face, they were to speak. He, turning a dusky red under his brown skin, signed to an attendant to bring her and her maid tea and lights for their pipes, while he laid out little samples of leaves on squares of brown paper, for her inspection. Her plump hands never quivered, as she raised the various brands to her nose, to test their flavor by their fragrance. She ordered a couple of catties of a delicate jasmine tea to be sent to her, and gave him her address with a meaning emphasis.

Of course, he delivered the tea himself, and of course. surrounded as she was by

servants, their intercourse was of the most formal charcter. It was she, however, who opened the package after he was gone, and searched eagerly through the leaves for the note she knew she would find. How she blessed the evil care her mother had taken to have her educated far above the usual standard of most Chinese women's acquirements!

His visits became as frequent as she thought prudent, only the little maid knowing his real interest in coming. Only the little maid knew, too, of those less frequent, but far sweeter interviews, stolen at rare intervals from her afternoous, when a hired -cart rumbled outside the "Chien Gate" and left her in a quiet dwelling far from her own palatial home, and equally far from the teashop. The other servants in the palace thought him merely one of the many merchants getting his "squeeze" out of her. as they all tried to do, knowing her plentiful supply of money. One day, he had not yet gone, when the warning cry of "Mei Ta-jen" apprised her of the arrival of Mertens. She hurried across the court from her apartments to the big pavilion of state, where he always found her standing on the steps to welcome

him, in her shimmering satin robe. This time she was a bit late, and Mertens asked her in playful sternness, what she had been doing.

"Only bargaining with a merchant, my lord", she replied. "He is, like all of Peking, a master in the art of squeezing and lying, and asks a tael of silver a foot for satin that is not at all noble."

"Send the scoundrel here, Littlest," said Mertens, and she tripped away, to get from her own store, a roll of satin, and prevail upon her lover to come to the great hall.

"What do you want for this?" asked Mertens, examining a piece of violet satin which had been in the girl's possession for months.

."He asks a tael a foot", she answered quickly, for him.

"Yes, Ta—jen, a tael a foot. It is a special weave, an imperial pattern."

"And you are a special thief and liar," said little Mertens, amiably, with the conviction of a connoisseur in that gentry. "What do you generally pay for these things, Littlest?"

"Eighty candereens a foot—that makes fifty taels for the piece." She had only added.

about twenty—five taels to the usual price.

"Well, my friend, you can have your fifty taels, but no more. Take it, and clear out, and here, Littlest, are doll-rags. Have the tailor make you something unusually stunning out of it for your birthday. Get rid of this chap, because Lee Ta-jen is coming pretty soon, and I want you to play him your new song."

The soi-disant merchant was ushered out, having divided the fifty taels with her, and she returned to Mertens. Together they waited on the cool verandah for Leland, Mertens watching her graceful body, which made soft curves like a cat's, as she swayed about on her tiny feet, putting finishing touches to the tea-table, which she had learned to order European fashion.

"Yes" he thought, "decidedly, I am right in my decision. It is jolly lucky that the old Vice-roy sees a way to buy himself back into favor with the old Catermaran; (such was little Merten's irreverent description of the Empress Dowager.) He is willing to raise money at any price—he'd sell his grandmother, if she hadn't prudently got out of the way, some years ago!"

Leland arrived at last, and Mertens, full

of his subject, explained at great length how, at his age, (he was just twenty—five,) one must begin to think of a career.

"It suits me here, in China," he declared, "and the chance of buying this place is too good to be missed. Fancy! Only twenty thousand taels for the whole show—it's worth sixty, if it's worth a cash. Why, that feng-shui screen alone, would be worth a thousand pounds, if one could take it to market. Look at that carved dragon of tiling—it's as fine as lace, and the imperial yellow, too. Curious idea, that, that evil spirits can only travel in straight lines, isn't it? and so they always have to put one of these screen things up before an entrance. We imagine evil spirits prefer a crooked pathway, don't we?"

He laughed, and then went on, encouraged into unwonted confidences by Leland's silence.

Ive got so far interested in Chinese that I don't see why I shouldn't keep it up, and write books and dictionaries, like all those chaps have done.; he announced with splendid confidence.

"What about your people?" asked Leland. "Won't they be apt to object to your burying yourself in China?"

"Well, my mother, of course-I suppose that she will miss me, but after all, you know, old chap, I suspect that I wasn't an unmixed blessing, when I honored the ancestral halls, and they probably think I'm pretty safe out here, under Rudolph's That legacy of Aunt Helene's put me right with the world--my father was no end pleased that I insisted upon squaring up with him—and it leaves me enough to buy this place besides, without tampering with my allowances, so I really think I am wise."

Leland preserved a dubious silence.

"Besides," Mertens went on, "you don't know what a home life I have," looking gratefully at the quiet little woman who was dropping blossoms of jasmine into a cup of steaming tea.

"They'd cut up too rough at home about that, but it is all the same to me and I think it is, too to her. Isn't it so, Littlest? You don't want to run away and leave me, do you?" he asked, dropping into the Chinese. "Especially as that fine son you promised me is on the way." he added jokingly.

"She thinks the whole duty of woman is to provide her spouse with a child, and has been desolate, hitherto, because none has been forthcoming," he continued, still in the vernacular. "That is Peking custom," as the Hsien Sheng would say. Personally, I'm not so keen on it. Don't like Eurasians, though if this little beggar takes after its mother, there'll not be a better chap on earth, Eurasian, or European. What do you think of it, Littlest, do you want to go away from me?"

"When my son is laid in my arms, then will I never leave the side of his father", she replied, solemnly.

"There!" said Mertens, "that clinches the argument. So China sees me for the rest of my days, and when I die, if I go first, I will leave this place to the little girl, here. Oh, really" he assured Leland, as the latter looked up, at him, suddenly. "Yes, that will make a rich woman of her. She will have these Chinese bucks running after her, no end, to marry her, poor little devil! She wasn't good enough, when she was at home with mamma."

The girl had been busy with her pretty duties as hostess, while he was talking,

paying apparently no heed to the conversation. The silver teapot was held motionless, just one breathless second, however, and she looked at him with shining eyes. Then she went tranquilly on, cutting cake, and counting lumps of sugar as though his remarks were of the smallest possible interest to her.

Leland, a longer resident in China, and a not so credulous acceptor of the point of view presented by the wily celestial, as Mertens was, watched her curiously. He saw nothing, however, but dignified self-possession, placid content, and perhaps a pretty little pride in her position as hostess.

"Wonderful people," he murmured, "She takes it all as though she were a princess of the blood, by Jove! Well, it's Mei Ta—jen's pidgin, and I wish him luck of it."

Some days later, after his bargain was concluded, and the palace was his, little Mertens was taken with a sharp attack of dysentery. The doctor came to see him, looked professionally grave, and remarked,—

"You will eat salad, you know, and uncooked fruit! No can do, in Peking, especially in September. Keep in bed, stick to chicken—soup, and you will be as right as

possible in a little while. Quiet and rest are all you want, with a careful diet."

"Well, I'll have that, and proper nursing, too. Tai-tai, here, is a worth a dozen professional nurses. She doesn't let a soul do a thing for me but herself," the invalid answered.

Yes, it is wonderful how faithful these Chinese women are, sometimes! Can I do anything for you? "Must be off to a typhoid patient," said the doctor.

"No, thanks,—oh, yes! Send Leland over, will you, and my brother. Of course, I know I am not going to die, but, as I am a property-holder now, I might as well make my will, so the little woman won't be left lamenting, especially with the kiddie coming along."

"Alright,', laughed the doctor, "but you are a bit premature, old chap! You've years ahead of you yet, to worry about such things in."

The will was duly made, signed, and sealed, and the nameless little Chinese waif found herself heiress to the splendid palace. Her narrow, shining eyes lighted a bit at the thought, and she moved about the room with a new dignity and purpose in her step, caring for the sick man.

Little Mertens' illness was of short duration, and they took up the even tenor of their life again. He found himself in not such good health as formerly, but the doctor told him reassuringly, that that was always the case after dysentery, and, if he continued to drink iced champagne, and indulge at will in salads and fruits, he must expect trouble.

In the winter, along about Christmas time, the child was born. The mother bore the ordeal with the same placid sweetness which characterized her in everything, and presented the world with a fine healthy boy, who was in all respects, Chinese.

Little Mertens' feelings were mixed, when he received the warm bundle in his arms, the first time. The littleness and helplessness appealed to his kindly heart, and out of his love for the mother, he found he had much to bestow upon the child; but he was unquestionably disappointed at first, to find it so thoroughly Chinese. reflection, however, he was rather glad than otherwise. If the boy grew up, looking as pure-bred as he did now, he should be raised as a Chinese, and no one need ever know of his mixed blood, which Mertens knew was held to be as great a disgrace by the Chinese, as by Europeans.

The mother recovered rapidly, and Mertens was permitted to view a new phase of her character. Her normal placidity was disturbed, and her love for her child was tigerish in its intensity and jealousy. little Mertens, relegated to second place in the establishment, was wont to wander forlornly through the the big, high-roofed pavilions, promenading alone up and down the covered ways, which led around the courts from one apartment to another. frequently lonely, poor little chap, and he was not at all well, besides. He hadn't shaken off the dysentery, and he seemed to catch cold so easily in the draughty Chinese house, with its paper covered lattices, and its faulty ventilation.

Absorbed in her child, the girl seemed to try to slip out of Mertens' life as much as possible. Never ardent in her demeanor towards him, she had always been sweetly complaisant, and he had been satisfied, believing that it was characteristic of Chinese women to maintain a constant reserve even with their husbands, or lovers. Now, however, he could almost imagine that it was indifference he detected in her manner, if not, indeed, actual dislike. This

was an unhappy time in Mertens' life, and he devoted himself more closely to his Chinese studies. He had surprised everybody by displaying an astonishing aptitude for the language and many people saw in him a sinologue of promise. His health was so bad though, that his ambition had frequently to be curbed, and when spring came again, the rigor of the icy winter broken, he hoped the mild season would bring him back the health and happiness of the previous year.

The doctor had promised him this, but finally, in conversation with little Mertens' brother, he admitted that the case worried him.

"It looks suspiciously like sprue", he remarked. "I haven't seen a case of dysentery hang on so obstinately through the winter, as this. Of course, it's such a common disease here, and Mertens has been imprudent, eating salads, and drinking—"

"Yes, yes", replied the brother, wearied with the inevitable recital of his brother's gastronomic crimes. "But do you think he is properly looked after? The young ass has got himself tangled up with that little Chinese beast, and living as he does, so secludedly, one doesn't know what happens".

"Oh, she's a jewel," the doctor assured him. "Lives simply for him and the child. He gets the best of care, that I can vouch for. She even does all his cooking, so don't worry about that. Only, he ought to go away. A trip, even to Japan, would do him good, but he won't hear of it, because she, like all inland Asiatics, is deathly afraid of the sea."

"Well, he seems to have been predestined to get himself into a pickle, wherever he is, so I suppose he'll pull out of this scrape all right. He's young and you say she is a good nurse, and we can't do anything for him," said His Excellency, washing his hands of his young brother's health and habits.

Little Merten's "pickles" were nearly over, however, as even the unprofessional eye could see. With the warm days of spring, his malady seemed to grow worse. He would lie for hours on the verandah, in a long chair, too weak to move, only content if "Littlest" and her boy were playing within sight of him. The little chap, with soft head entirely shaved, dressed in quaint garments, which left his little rear extremity all bare, would lie in the sun, quite content

and silent for hours——or Little Plum would hush him to sleep with a quaint lullaby——

"My flower is sleeping,

"My flower has fallen asleep.

"My flower is resting-

"My flower is a quiet son.

"Sleep, my flower! Rest, my son!"

She dressed him in the gayest colors, and one day capped all the gorgeousness, by tying a yellow sash around him.

"Why do you do that?" asked Mertens.

"Are you trying to make 'Yellow Girdle' of him?"

"He is a 'Yellow Girdle,'"she answered proudly.

"I'm delighted to hear that Imperial blood flows in the veins of my son," said Mertens, "but I thought you were Chinese, not Manchu."

"Yes, I am Chinese," she explained, "but the mother of my mother's father was of the Imperial clan, so my son can wear the yellow girdle."

"Well," "said Mertens," the Imperial drop must be a bit microscopic, by now, with all that dilution, to say nothing of the admixture of the vital fluid of the Mertens! Never mind! I salute his Highness, and I hope he will grow up to be worthy of it."

Dropping his joking, he reflected that he would never live to see what this small atom of humanity would make of the life he had given him, and he felt rather glad of it. He was beginning to be tired of the mere exertion of living, and longed for the time when he could drop all problems, and rest.

The time came all too soon. Peking society, diplomatic, and otherwise, was shocked to have the announcement of the death of "René Etienne de Mertens, younger brother of His Excellency" etc, etc.

All mourned for the good little chap, and the doctor drove the whole club mad with his eternal explation of,——

"He would eat salads, you know, and drink iced drinks, in spite of all I could say, and he wouldn't go away! Of course, if a man will eat salads in Peking!"

She, the little Chinese woman, who, sweetly and quietly, had healed the wounds made in the gentle heart of little Mertens by the cruel parents and the golden-haired enchantress,—she too, mourned, most correctly, with her forehead bound in white cotton cloth, long ends of which hung down her back—her satin gown covered with the same coarse

calico, and her five-inch feet shod in white. Her little son was garbed throughout in morning robes of the whitest and coarsest, for the benefactor he was too young to regret.

After all the excitement of the funeral was over, Mertens, senior, repaired to the residence of his late brother, and there the heiress's formally over into gave charge, the splendid dwelling, and also informed her that a certain income was settled up on her son for life. He also under took to assure her, that at least during his tenure of office, she should be protected in the possession of the place, and he thought he had influence enough to arrange that she should never be disturbed during her life.

She understood that all lands held by foreigners in Peking were subject to uncertainties, but he still thought it best, at least as long as he retained his position, to let it stand in his brother's name.

She tried to kneel before his Excellency, to express her thanks, but he, with a European's dread of a scene, hurried away, and she was finally left alone—alone with her palace, her money, and her son.

Events re-adjusted themselves soon in Peking, after the death of little Mertens.

He wasn't badly missed, after all, as he had spent so much of his life shut up in his high-walled palace. Indeed, he would have been quite forgotten in a little while, if he had not become personified as an awful "example." Newcomers, who had never even seen him, found themselves repeating to friends whom they saw indulging in dietetic imprudences, "Take care, old chap! Don't forget the case of little Mertens—you know how he got sprue!"

And inside the palace? Things re-ad justed themselves there, too. The domestic wheels ran smoothly under the direction of the plump, placid little woman, who, satinhaired, satin-skinned, satin-clad, walked softly all her days. Warm nights, on the roof of the summer-house in the garden, basking in the moonlight, she would play her lute, sing the songs of Li Po, and repeat again the tales of the Mings, and the martial Hans. At her feet, her little son, with horns of braided hair sticking out from his smooth head, frolicked, or lay gravely round regarding the moon. By her side, a stately Manchu, wearing a yellow girdle, lolled in a long chair, smoking a water-pipe and sipping hot tea. He did not drink iced

champagne, nor eat salads.

Perfect peace reigned behind the high walls. There had been only one disagreeable interlude, and that was when Little Plum desired to dismiss her maid. The maid had startled her out of her usual calm by demanding money of her—a large sum, a huge sum, indeed!

"Egg of a tortoise!" she sneered, "Why should I give you money? You have served me only three years, and very badly at that!"

"Why, indeed! screamed the maid. "Shall I tell you why? Because, if you do not give me money, I shall go to great Mei Ta-jen, and tell him that you gave his brother chopped bamboo in his food. I shall tell him to ask his foreign doctor what sickness chopped bamboo will make, and how they are to tell it from the sickness thev said little Mei Ta-jen died of!" For one dreadful moment the calm of the little woman was almost shaken. This was something she had not reckoned upon. House, money, life itself could be snatched from her hold, and in her heart she cursed the negligence that had permitted the prying maid to make this discovery.

Presently, however, she purred in her silkiest tones.

"Poor girl! It is the heat of the sun that has turned your brain. Mei Ta-jen died of a foreign sickness called sprue, and I nursed him—ah, how carefully I nursed him! Ask the doctor! Ask the world how faithful I was! You rave, but you are right in one thing—you must have money, as you must go to your home in Shensi, and you cannot work in your present sad state. You shall have it, and to-morrow, you shall start in my own cart, that you may be well looked after."

The maid, satisfied that her mistress was in her power, said no more, but secretly rather afraid of her own temerity, packed hastily, and was ready to leave by daylight the next morning. Her mistress gave her the money, a bulky bag of silver, enough to make her a great "partie" in Shensi, and bade her a plesant "Good-bye."

Just before the cart started, Little Plum called the carter to her, and said to him,—

"The girl with you has three hundred taels of silver. There are many brigands outside of Peking. Three hundred taels of silver would be a great temptation for them... I give her into your hands.

The carter and the mistress looked at each other a moment.

"Tai-tai's orders are my life," said the carter, and departed on his way.

There was a certain tense expectancy about the little woman's manner all that day and the next, and in fact, until the succeeding afternoon, when the carter returned.

He was in terrible distress! His Tai-tai would in all probability cause him to be killed. But a day's journey from Peking, they had been attacked by brigands. He had done his best, but unfortunately, they had killed the poor maid. However, he had made such a valiant defence, that in running away, they had dropped the bag of money, which he had brought back to return to Tai-tai.

Again mistress and man looked at each other. "You are doubtless a very brave man," she remarked at length. "A brave man should not be poor. What was intended to reward one servant may as well be used to reward another. You may keep the money."

The carter prostrated himself before her, and withdrew with his treasure.

After that, only tranquillity reigned in the dwelling little Mertens called "In the midst of peace."

And the old resident, when he observed young men going the pace from ennui, would instruct them to go in for "things Chinese," giving little Mertens as an instance of the success attendant upon following his advice. He had come to fancy himself as an arbiter of destinies.

1



"Unchastity covers a multitude of virtues", remarked Egerton Scott. He was called Tommie because he had once had a friend named Jerry.

"That's all very fine, but you'll find that it takes more than a multitude of epigrams to cover unchastity", said John Drummond.

"Yes", added young Evans. "What a life-long repentance, and any amount of Christian charity can't accomplish, should n't be expected of a feeble epigram—one of Tommie Scott's epigrams, too!" he exclaimed, with fine scorn of the home-made prophet.

"Oh, I don't know," said Scott, lazily, "it's a poor saw that doesn't work both

"But this particular saw doesn't cut any ice" ----

"Oh, I say, Evans", broke in Reggie Madison. "You chaps are a bit too gymnastic. From unchastity to ice, via epigrams and saws! I object! You're slangy besides, and that's vulgar. But worse than that, you are unnatural. Unchastity and ice, in the same breath! You might as well talk of a Burgundy frappe," finished Reggie, conclusively, with the air of one who has named the last impossibility in nature.

"But what is it all about, anyway?" asked John Drummond, who had just joined the group in time to catch Scott's remark.

"We were talking about little Elsie Everett," explained Scott.

"Ah, that little red-headed flame of Macdonald's. Well, what of her?"

"Shades of Titian!" gasped Reggie.
"Red-headed! That cable of burnished copper....those threads of spun...."

"Spare us, Reggie," broke in young Evans. "If it isn't shades of Titian, it's a Titian shade, anyway, and her hair has nothing to do with the lady's character, which we were discussing."

"Indeed? I should have thought her character was beyond discussion," remarked Drummond.

"Well, that's just what I was contendingthat she has a great deal more character, and of a better kind than many—or, indeed, most people." said Scott. "Of course, we all know that Elsie isn't....well, exactly in society, but as I was just saying, that for sweetness, charity, and loyal honesty....,"

"In short," said Drummond, "if she'd been a man, she'd have been a perfect gentleman—but having the misfortune to be a woman, with her peculiar morals, she is...."

"Not, in society", finished Reggie.

"Exactly", said Scott, "but, as I was saying, I've never met her equal, and I've known a lot of women, of all sorts."

"So we have been led to understand", said Evans. "Well, maskee her character, it's a beastly shame that she should be all smashed up like this."

"Like what?" questioned Drummond.
"I've been out to tea with my wife this afternoon, and haven't been down town till now, so I don't know anything about anything."

"What a curious effect tea seems to have upon you....sort of an anaesthesia! Now, it takes something a great deal stronger...."

"Oh, shut up, Reggie, and give these fellows a chance to tell me about it. What was

it? An accident, or has Macdonald suddenly cast himself for the rôle of Othello?" asked Drummond.

"She was out Bubbling Well driving and a run-away brougham smashed into her victoria, and chucked her out. Somebody picked her up, and drove her to the hospitaloh, yes, it was Doc. Booth....he just happened along then, in his go-cart."

"Good old Doc!" said Drummond, approvingly. "Is she much hurt?"

"That's just it. She is awfully hurt. Probably dead, by now." answered Scott.

"Whew!" whistled Drummond. "That being the case, what price our distinguished friend, Richard Carlyle Macdonald? Seriously, isn't he pretty hard hit in that direction?"

"Oh, Dick! You never can tell about him! He always has two or three women on a string. Remember how he rushed Mrs. Talbot-Rivett? And at the same time, he was being adored by, and was most conscientiously adoring Minnie Sylvester, or some such person, in that variety show of sorts, that was here at the time. There is no question, though, but that poor little Elsie is

in earnest about him," said Scott.

"Well, then, what becomes of Miss Wyvert?" asked Reggie. "He must be going to marry her. Papa and Mamma Wyvert are not going to stand having the girl made conspicuous for a whole winter, all for nothing."

"I always had an idea that he would play the giddy ox, and marry Elsie, finally," said Scott.

"Well, he can't marry both of them," said Reggie, instructively. "Not but that he would be delighted. Good old Dick! He would marry them all if popular prejudice didn't put him off. And I have my doubts about his marrying Elsie. It takes a deal of courage, you know, for a step like that, especially as he hasn't any money but his screw, and brother-in-law would soon curtail that, if he went and did anything desperate. That is the worst of having a relative for a taipan. They're always so beastly tender of one's morals."

"It's plain to see that you never filled any engagement with a relative," jeered Evans.

Reggie put on the expression of a maligned cherub, and ordered a lemon squash, just as a guarantee of respectability.

"I wondered that Elsie never discovered how strong Dick was going with Miss Wyvert," Scott went on. "I shouldn't like to have her jealous of me!"

"She told me once that she was too conceited to be jealous of anyone," remarked Reggie. "But, after all, she didn't know as much about it, probably, as we did. As has been before remarked, Elsie was not in society, and she was a good deal of a stay-at-home, besides. She never went out, much,only for her drive, in the afternoon. She couldn't tell what was going on at dances and teas, and no one was kind enough, or brutal enough, to tell her.

Besides, it's easy enough to keep two affairs of that sort apart. I think the only one who scores, is Dick. It doesn't matter much to him, apparently, which of the two girls he finally annexes permanently. Who is it that says, "Man's love is of his life a thing apart....'tis woman's whole existence!" Shakespeare, wasn't it?"

"Oh, Reginald!" said Evans reproachfully. "That is one of the few things that Shakespeare did not say. Byron made that statement, my erudite young friend,....and he probably knew!"

Just then the door opened, and a burly man in a mackintosh entered. He was hailed with enthusiasm.

"Hi! Doc.! Mr. Doctor! You're just the man we want to see!" cried the men in chorus. "Have you come from the hospital?"

"Yes" answered Dr. Booth. "By Jove, it is raining! Boy, bring me a pony brandy. This sort of thing lays one open to fever."

"Fever!" jeered Reggie. "You couldn't catch fever in a pest house! Anyone who dallies with the playful cholera-germ, in the laboratory of its nativity, and then goes and drinks Whang-poo water out of the tap without washing his hands, needn't worry about getting fever in pure and sparkling rain-water!"

"Well, I don't drink out of my hands, I give you my word! The Municipal Council allows me a tin cup, it does, indeed!"

- "How's Elsie?" asked Scott.
- "Bad," answered Booth.
- "What! won't she live?" two or three asked anxiously.
- "I don't see how she can," said Booth slowly, "and on the whole, I don't think she'd better. She's pretty well smashed up...all the injuries are in the head, mostly...and

---the face. I'm afraid she would be a fairly dreadful looking object, if she did recover. She's young and strong though, and it is possible that she will pull through" he went on cautiously "though, really, I think it would be a pity if she did."

"Poor little devil!" said Drummond.
"How does Dick take it?"

"I left him at the hospital, raging like a hydrophobic hyena, because they wouldn't let him in," sad the Doctor.

"Why didn't they let him in? I should think that, failing a menagerie, a hospital would be just the proper place for him, if your diagnosis is correct," Reggie remarked.

"Oh, well, of couse, he couldn't see her to-night, anyway. There seems to be some absurd rule over there about not permitting anyone but male relatives to visit the female patients." explained Booth.

"I should call Dick a male relative of Elsie's, after all," mused Reggie.

"I've no doubt you would, but decent members of society wouldn't be apt to," said Scott, crushingly. "What's become of Dick, Doc.?

"Oh, I gave him a morphine pill to take when he gets home. I suppose he's gone to by-low by now," Booth answered.

"Yes, he'd hardly come around to the Club, to-night." said Evans. "No! by Jove, there he is, now!"

The door swung open to admit a tall, good-looking young man in riding-kit, who made his way to a table far away from the group at the bar. His eyes were swollen, and his whole aspect showed the signs of a heavy grief. Nobody approached him. They all felt sorry for him, but, tongue-tied Englishmen that they were, could not find words to express their sympathy. Booth shook his head when he saw the number of brandy-sodas that the boy carried to that table, but when, after about an hour, they helped Macdonald, quite incapacitated, into a rickshaw, and sent him home in the rain, no one added anything to Reggie's parting.

"Good-night, old chap! Buck up, and don't lose your grip! Booth says he will have her out of there in no time, and as pretty as ever."

Drummond gave the signal to break up.

"Good-night, you fellows! Night, Reggie, you blooming young liar! That lie ought to take precedence of most of your truths, in the ledger up yonder!" and he stepped into his brougham, and was rapidly driven off.

The men dispersed to their homes, and in a few days the exposure of a bank swindle drove all thought of the injured girl out of their heads.

Over in the hospital, the days of pain passed in weary procession, but life still clung tenaciously to the shattered frame. A single iron bed, curtained in white, was pulled close to the verandah door of the small, cheerless room. By the head of the bed was a table, with a burning candle and a litter of medicine bottles on it. Crouched on the floor, an old Chinese woman huddled, embracing her knees, and staring patiently into the empty fire-place. A nun sat upright on a leather sofa, reading her "office." Through the open door, came a delicate tropic breeze, whispering among the palms down in the court, and heavy with the scent of magnolias. A great moon silvered the edge of the verandah, and the shadow of a huge palm leaf seemed to lay the tips of giant fingers on the brilliant spot.

The mosquito-net shrouding the bed almost concealed the figure within, and Elsie's weak voice sounded with startling

suddenness from among the pillows.

"Amah!"

The amah clambered up clumsily on to her bound feet, and answered with joy, "Oh, Missie, you have got more better, now!

She turned to the nun, and said in 'pidgin English,' "My Missie just now savee. Head belong ploper."

The nun advanced to the bed, and the big violet eyes looked up at her questioningly, from among the bandages.

"You have been very ill, my dear, and have been unconscious for some time. You must be careful to be quiet, but do you want anything?" She seemed to speak in great, though suppressed, excitement.

The eyes kept themselves fastened upon the nun's face in perplexity. Perplexity gave place to groping wonder, and finally recognition flashed into them. "You!" she cried, in a voice, which, though faint, thrilled with a great joy. Tears welled up from the depths of her big eyes, and flowed out of the corners, moistening the bandages on the temples. She cried weakly, without speaking, and the nun fell on her knees by the bedside, reaching out and embracing the helpless figure, all her self-command gone. "Oh, Elsie, my little, little, lost sister! You know me, you know me! How afraid I have been that you would....that you might never know me! Oh, my poor baby sister! I have found you at last, at last! It is in answer to my ceaseless prayers, and how I shall thank the Blessed Virgin for this kindness!"

Elsie was continuing to cry feebly, trying to hold Sister Mary's hand in herweak grasp. Finally she whispered:

"It cannot be true, that it is really you! Oh, I am so happy, but....Gertrude,....I. Lare been so bad....you will not be glad you have found me when you know all about it...."

"Darling, I know everything! Be quiet, now. You have nothing to make you unhappy, now. You are going to get well, and then you are never to leave me again. We shall be two unworthy servants of God, and will forget all the past. The future will be so beautiful that we shall have no time to think of things that have been."

"Ah...I forget....there is Dick," whispered Elsie weakly. "I could not leave him...we could not bear to be separated ...we have never been apart since I first.

knew him. He could not give me up, any more than I could live without him! Have you seen him?"

"No, dear, he has not been...you have been too ill for visitors, but there are letters here. I will give them to you, but you must not try to read them now."

She took a small package of letters from the table drawer, and untying the string that kept them together, dropped them upon Elsie's hands. The sick girl tried to raise them to her lips, but her hands trembled so that she could not hold them.

"So many?" she said feebly. "How long have I been ill? Every day....a letterhe always sent me one every day. How many are there, Gertrude?"

"Eight, darling," said Sister Mary, thrilling at the sound of the old familiar name.

"I have been ill eight days, and he wrote---every day of the week---" She smiled, happily.

"Yes, he wrote every one of the eight days," said Sister Mary, praying in her heart to be forgiven for keeping back the fact that there were five times eight days that he had not written.

"He will be glad....when I get well," Elsie murmured. "And you will be glad, too, Gertrude, because we have it all plannedwe are going to get married, and go away some where....ah, I am too happy, now that I have you too, my sister!"

Her voice was husky and faint, and she brought each word out with difficulty. Sister Mary noticed the exhaustion with horror, and lifted the bandaged head up, to give spoonfuls of some stimulant that stood handy. Elsie smiled dreamily at her, and lay quite still with the precious letters on her breast.

The moonlight was obscured for a moment, and the Mother Superior and the Doctor entered together. Sister Mary gave place to them so that they could come under the mosquito curtain.

The Doctor examined the chart pinned on the wall, scrutinized the girl's eyes carefully, and lifted her left hand to feel her pulse. A perturbed expression wrinkled his forehead, and he laid her hand down gently, but with a curious air of finality, and signing to the Mother Superior and Sister Mary, withdrew with them to the verandah.

"I can't quite make it out," he said. "The injury to the head seems to be doing nicely,

but there seems to be an unexplainable weakness....the heart perhaps....I wish I had brought the stethoscope....but of course a thorough examination would be difficult through all the bandages. However, we can keep on as before. Sister Mary, your nursing has passed the bounds of mere human endurance. You must be worn out! I wish I could give you more hope, but rest is the best thing,...rest and absolute quiet...no excitement of any kind...though, indeed, there is little chance of it in this peaceful place," he said, breathing deeply of the perfumed breeze. "It's too bad, indeed, but I'm afraid there is really no hope," he continued to the Mother Superior, as Sister Mary started towards the room. She stopped half way, and cried in tones made tense and clear by agony.

"No hope, really, no hope?"

The Doctor shook his head and the nun hastened into the patient's room.

Elsie had heard the two final words, and she felt a tightening in the throat, and a curious, slow chill crept over her. She clutched the precious letters to her heart.

Sister Mary fell again on her knees by the side of the bed, and told her beads with nervous fervour, her coiffed head pressed against the bedside.

"I heard." faltered Elsie. "I heard, sister! I am going to die! Do you know what that means for me? Darkness, loneliness, hopelessness for all eternity! There is no future for me, no heaven....I know it! Oh, I cannot die, I can't! I am afraid, afraid, afraid!" The feeble voice rose shrill with terror, on the still night.

Sister Mary was now praying rapidly, with her streaming eyes hidden in her hands. The amah sat on the foot of the couch, twisting her hands together in speechless grief.

Elsie was silent for some moments after her outburst, then she said quietly:—

"Gertrude!"

The nun removed her hands from her face and listened.

"I must see him...Dick...to say good-bye. It is coming fast...I feel it, and unless you hurry...it will be too late! Go to him and fetch him!"

Sister Mary shook her head at the hopelessness of the idea, but rose to her feet.

"I will try, Elsie," she said, and glided out of the room.

Shortly after, she returned, and kneeling, put her arms around the girl. "I cannot

go." she said, brokenly. "It is against the rules. The Reverend Mother won't let me. Oh, dear child, can't you turn your heart to Heaven and forget this man?"

"There is no Heaven for me, I tell you!" the girl cried, excitedly. "There is Dick___auvwhere! only Bring him here! I must see him! can you think of rules, and prohibitions, That icy woman cannot when I am dying! feel my agony! Gertrude, I implore you! They cannot do anything to you, even if they find it out, and no one need ever know the amah will take you to his house, and he will come so quietly --- truly he will ----Gertrude, have you found me, only to send me to my grave with a broken heart? you want him to curse you for keeping us apart, when I am dying ... dying? Think of it! Oh, go, go, for pity's sake! I will be good ... I will be quite quiet ... I will not even speak, until I tell him good-bye."

The weak, hurried voice ceased. A strange look of virginal peace stole over the white face. Sister Mary bent down and kissed her, saying.

"God forgive me for my disobedience, but I will go, come what may!" The stealthy closing of the little gate made a slight sound down in the court, and then there was utter silence. The candle burned up in a long bright flame. The moon had sunk lower, throwing a longer beam of light on the verandah floor, and defining more clearly the encroaching fingers of the shadow hand. Elsie lay breathless, in a tense expectancy, holding fast to the letters, and listening with strained senses for the footsteps she loved.

Sister Mary was speeding out into the moonlit night, her black gown fluttering, and the great wings of her white coif gleaming around the set face like a nimbus, as she and the amah hastened along on their errand.

An hour later, the Mother Superior herself opened the gate to admit the nun. Not a word was spoken until they reached the middle of the courtyard. Then the Mother Superior motioned the Chinese woman away, and turned to her companion.

"I knew you would go, and I knew that you would come back...alone. Mary, my daughter, you are clinging too much to the world. What are these passions to you, that you should commit such an unheard of extravagance...such an unprecedented

disobedience? I have been walking here, considering your penance, ever since I discovered your absence."

"Oh, don't talk to me of penances. She is my sister, my little lost sister, given back to me after years of separation! How can I tell her that the man she loves has not come....that he will never come! Set me any penance you like....I will pray a week on my bare knees, on the stones of this courtyard, if you will but tell her for me that my flight was useless, that he will not come....,"and Mary grovelled in supplication at the feet of the rigid figure before her.

"No, daughter, you must tell her yourself. That is your penance. You must tell her everything. It is the only proper punishment for both of you, for your disobedience. Come!"

The Mother Superior led the way up on to the verandah, and into the room, where the candle flame and the moonlight...rosy life, and pale death....struggled for possession. As they entered the door, the candle guttered out, leaving the white bed bathed in the cold glow of the moon. The tips of the black shadow fingers were waveringly grasping at the foot of the bed, as the night

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breeze sighed through the palms. The Mother Superior stood at the side of the door, and signed for Mary to kneel in the middle of the room. Mary sank down, after one appealing look at the inflexible face of the older nun.

A long minute of silence, and she began:-"Elsie, I went. The amah led me to the place. The house was lighted brilliantly, and there were carriages before the gate. As the servant admitted me, I could see through the curtained arch into the drawing room. It was filled with people, and flowers, and shaded lamps. There was a ball going on.... a fancy dress ball. I saw the servant go and speak to a young man in a courtier's dress, who was dancing with a sirl in white. He seemed annoyed at the interruption, but I could see him excuse himself to the young girl, and follow the servant out into the hall, where I took refuge behind a screen. Elsie," she said brokenly, the words seeming to be forced out of her by the stern looks of the Mother Superior, "I told him who I was and where I had come from....how I had broken the rules of my order to come to him, bringing your message. I implored him to return with me, to come then to see you....

and he...oh, my poor little girl...he refused!"

Her eyes asked the older nun, "Must I go on?" The Superior bent her head.

"He thanked me, dear,....for coming, but said it was impossible that night, but that he would come in the morning. I told him that to-morrow would be too late____that he would not be admitted....that perhaps you....oh, I went down on my knees to implore him to come then. But it was useless! I could not move him. He was embarrassed, unhappy, I could see that, ---and finally he told me that this ball was being given by his sister to celebrate his engagement....to that young girl in white, I suppose. My poor little one! To think that I should be the one to bring you these tidings! At last, I saw that pleadings were useless, and I could not wait I had to come back___alone!" any longer.

With a strangling sob, Sister Mary fell prone among the dragging curtains of the bed. Tremblingly, she waited for the despair of the girl, while the Reverend Mother stood motionless in her place, and the encroaching hand of the palm shadow clutched the white bed full in its black grasp.

Some minutes passed. Sister Mary lifted her head, amazed at the strange silence which hung over everything. Rising, she tore aside the curtains, and gazed down upon the dead face of the girl who was not to speak until she bade her lover good-bye.

A moment Mary stood there, stricken dumb and dazed. Then she turned, and cried in a terrible voice:—

"Wretched woman, need my penance have been her murder?"

"My daughter," the Superior answered, "your penance is finished. She was dead before she heard one word from your lips. Elsie was dead while you were still on your way to her lover. I knew what the result of your quest would be, and that is why I forbade it. Give thanks to God, that for your disobedience, she was not kept alive to hear your story. Your own heart can tell you what she would have suffered. Be grateful that she was spared this one last pain. Now, go! Go down to the chapel, and pray for her soul. I will watch here."

The next morning, Macdonald's boy brought him several letters with his tea and fruit. A bill or two, a few notes of congratulation were looked over, and then he opened this one. It read....
"My dear Macdonald,

In view of your approaching happiness, I dislike exceedigly, to have to obtrude anything unpleasant on your notice, but considering everything, I thought it was my duty to let you know that Elsie died this morning about one o'clock. It is much better that she has escaped all her troubles, as she would have been horribly disfigured, if she had pulled through.

Wyvert told me this morning on the Race Course of your engagement. My best congratulations to you. I hope you will make her very happy.

Elsie is to be buried at five this afternoon. Hot weather, you know.

Yours very truly,

Martin Booth."

When Macdonald had finished reading this letter, he tore it up into very small pieces, which he dropped among the orange peel on his plate. Then he heaved a deep sigh. It may have been a sigh of regret...or, it may have been a sigh of relief. Sighs are among the most difficult expressions of emotion to classify.

At any rate, he ordered a large pillow of

white roses, inscribed with the word "Rest" to be sent to the hospital before five o'clock. At the same time, he also bespoke a basket of red roses for his fiancée, who was a brunette; and he was careful to impress most strongly upon his boy's mind, the dire consequencess which would befall him, the boy, in case he confused the addresses.

WITH THE AID OF WHITE POPPIES *

The two had not been life-long friends so much as constant associates. Indeed, it may be said that there was no such thing as friendship in their feeling for each other. Rather, a sort of armed neutrality existed, dating from the days, when as boys, they had played together, simply because they were neighbours, and there were not many other boys in that particular vicinity to associate with. It was a friendship which like many love-affairs had begun in propinquity and had endured through habit. All their playing had been marked by strife, however, and Chou bore to this day, a scar on his shaven head, where Liu had pulled out a handful of hair in their last great battle. This had been fought in true Chinese style,....first, with much shouting out, "in high-piping Pehlevi," of personal and intimate references to the characters of

each opponent and his female relatives, from remotest antiquity down to the last possible generation which could be produced by a virile stock; next, with sundry buffetings, and kicks which are not recognized by the Queensbury rules, and are only in vogue among Chinese, and certain of the Latin races, finally, the clinch and throw, in panting silence—shaven crown held fast to shaven crown, by hands firmly wound in the wiry pigtails, and the legs and bodies writhing and squirming like decapitated angle-worms. Each tries to rid himself of that disabling grip, which grinds his face or scalp into the earth, and struggles for the final triumph of scrambling to his knees and gouging out an eye or so.

The boys were as well matched physically, as boys, in those days, as they were now, as men, and the result of that mighty combat was a drawn battle. Much blood had been shed, and a portion of Chou's scalp had been detached when a mediator appeared from somewhere, and so the dispute was settled by that indispensable third party who is necessary to the conclusion of all Oriental encounters.

Chou and Liu had been separated, helped

up, and held by the bystanders who had flocked around, and as they brushed down their dark blue linen garments, twisted up their dishevelled pigtails, conversation recommenced, and the plain, unvarnished opinions with which the crowd was furnished on the history of the Chou's and Liu's, were delivered this time spasmodically, with heaving chests, and foam-flecked, blood-stained lips. As they were being led away by the men who had been holding them, Chou turned, and hurled after Liu a threat of hatred and vengeance that should neither sleep nor die.

Liu, the more peaceable of the two, shrugged his shoulders, wondered what the row was really all about, anyway, and betook himself into his father's shop. His father sold incense, as had his fathers and grand-fathers before him, in this same shop for some hundreds of years. The dim old place, cool and dark, and sweet with the garnered scent of fragrant woods and odorous powders, was just the place to quiet the ruffled nerves of Liu, and soothe his shaken spirit.

This great battle had happened many years ago....fully ten, and the two men had long since taken up their amicable intercourse. Living opposite each other, of an equal age,

and a corresponding rank and financial standing, their lives followed the general plan. Both affected a large smoky restaurant, "outside Chien-men," where they often found themselves guests at the samedinners, or where they even entertained each other. In the "long rooms" of the district, if Miss Lotus-Blossom poured warm samshu into small green porcelain cups one night for Liu, and sang him knowing ditties to her mandoline, that celebrated "sing-song" damsel poured samshu and warbled the next night Finally, they both met nearly for Chou. every night at the "Dwelling of the Golden, Dreams," to smoke opium.

This place was exceedingly popular with a certain class of well-to-do shop-keepers, small officials and teachers who had pupils in the Legation Quarter, and the habitués of this Club, as it really might be called, seeing Chou and Liu sharing the same mat, and "cooking" over a common lamp, looked upon them as intimate friends. Liu, too, had been betrothed to Chou's sister, and it was because of her death from small-pox that the two were not drawn together still more closely by the tie of relationship. So it was, that in everything but affection, these two men were as-

close to each other as sons of the same mother.

Liu was lounging late one afternoon in the back room of the elder Chou's shop, idly picking over some samples of silk, preparatory to selecting a new coat for the New Year. Young Chou stood by his side, laughingly holding up lengths of emerald green, magenta, and other violent shades, sacred to women's apparel, and coaxing him to appear in one of them, or better, a delicate combination of several; when suddenly there was silence and all laid aside their trifling, to resume the dignity of the male, in the presence of that inferior creature, woman.

A handsome old matron had just entered, accompanied by a young girl. Chou signed to assistants, who pointed out chairs placed at each side of a pearl-inlaid table, upon which presently appeared two cups of steaming tea, and two nickle water-pipes, with tobacco and spills for lighting.

Liu, as became a gentleman, appeared to be interested in his own concerns, after the first glance of natural curiosity at the new-comers. After the first look, however, not a movement of the lovely girl was missed, not a glint of her sparkling black eyes, nor a

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flash of her white teeth. And how he envied Chou, who, in his capacity of member of thefirm, could approach, speak to, and serve thisdainty thing and her handsome mother!

The two women drank their tea with many gurglings and much noisy satisfaction, then placidly lighted their pipes, and puffed the little bowl empty time and again, while Chou and his assistants spread out before them piece after piece of shimmering satin. The old woman talked incessantly. had been to the "Loong-Foo" temple____yes, to the Mongol fair. It was the first time her daughter had been out of their inconsiderable yamen....yes, since she was a little girl and wore a pig-tail, because, much incense to the god of luck, there had been no funerals for many years in their family, though also, alas, no weddings. Yes, it was quite time her daughter saw something of the world, and learned to do her own shopping, as she was a woman at So the old woman ran on, cheapening now a piece of green satin, now a piece of exquisite gravish purple, which she called, picturesquely, grape-colour.

All the time the girl sat there, her feet in their embroidered stilt-heeled shose, danglig before her. Her plump arm rested quietly

on the table, with the little hand held to show to the best advantage, the three-inch finger-nails of the fourth and little fingers, which were cased in silver sheaths worn thimble fashion, gorgeous with much enamel. Now and then, she would murmur a reply to her mother's questions, or would wipe her pretty painted mouth with a silk handkerchief. Generally, though, she sat motionless, her eyes cast down, her whole demeanour the perfection of self-possessed modesty.

Beneath her wadded rose-pink coat, her little heart was fluttering within This had been altogether greatest day of her life. Not only had she had her hair done up for the first time, with the big false piece pinned on the crown of her head, which made her look as though she was leaning against the back of an ebony chair; not only was she arrayed from the out in silks of the costliest, and embroidery the most delicate; not only was she gorgeous with all the kingfisher-feather and enamelled jewellery the family possessed; not only had she been allowed to stop under the awning of the jewel booth at the fair, and purchase for herself a jade hairpin;

not only all this, enough to turn any girl's head, but here she was in a shop, actually being allowed a choice in the colour of her next new gown, and, crowning excitement of all, actually speaking to——yes, speaking to a young man. A strange young man, a man not her father, or her uncle, or a servant! Ah! It was worth while to be alive to enjoy only once in a lifetime such dissipations as had been hers, on this, her eighteenth birthday!

Choice finally fell upon a piece of applegreen satin, and the two Manchu women swayed off on their stilt-heeled shoes, followed by Chou, who himself carried their bundle to the door. Liu was not far behind them, and the two young men stood in the open shop-front, and watched with keen interest as the girl was carefully packed into the back of the cart, while the mother hoisted her wadded body up on to the front of the cart, carefully shutting Miss Daughter away from the view of the vulgar multitude. The cart driver chirrupped to the fat pony, mamma bowed and smiled, and the young girl ducked her flower-decked head so that she could see out of the gauze window of the cart cover, and gave the youths a last vision of

a dimpled laughing painted face, so young and fresh, and so tempting, that if there had been any admiration left for them to surrender, it would have been delivered up then. Liu's capitulation had been complete, however, and as the springless vehicle lumbered heavily off, he looked at Chou a moment in silence.

Chou went directly to work.

"Who are they? Have you ever seen them before?" he asked.

"No, they are quite unknown to this person. Evidently Manchu ladies of distinction! why didn't you have a slave carry their silk, to find out the locality of their honourable Yamen?"

"Because this person was too anxious to know, and the mother would have divined it," said Chou shrewdly. "However," he added, "I will find out to-morrow, and will tell you."

Liu swung off across the street, thinking only of the beautiful girl, and especially of a witching little dimple high up on her left cheek, close under the eyes. He had never seen a dimple just there before, common as the beauty marks are on plump and comely Chinese women, and it fascinated him. He

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found himself on a sudden, cordially agreeing with his father that it was indeed high time that he married. How he regretted that he had no sister, or sister-in-law, to find out this pretty fairy for him and get her for his wife.

Quick-witted Chou, more ingenious and subtle than Liu, sent at once for an old woman who was "go-between" for that part of town, and who, managing the marriages, had all the eligibles of both sexes, in the vicinity, at her finger's ends.

Chou welcomed the old woman eagerly, on her arrival, and plied her with tea, pipes, dried water-melon seeds and sugared peanuts with unwearied hospitality, while she was mumbling over the names of the families likely to contain so beautiful a daughter. Finally she exclaimed:——

"This person is at last awake! It is the second and younger daughter of the Hans. It is Su Hsien....White Fairy. A dimple, you say, under the left eye? Aha, aho! How a man sees, to be sure, when a girl is young and pretty! Now any woman in Peking could have told you that is not a dimple, but a scar! Her poor elder sister has those dimples all over her

face....and if the neighbors say the truth, her temper is as badly scarred as her face! Yes, the same illness that took away that most beautiful of maids, your honourable sister, played sad havoc with the elder Han girl. See the luck! White Fairy gets a new beauty, her sister loses hers, and your sister loses beauty and life! Poor Purple-Azalea! It is not often one hears her called by that, her real name, since they name her Ma-tzu, on account of the dimples!" The old woman chuckled over her joke, until Chou interrupted her:———

"Go, then, to the Hans, to-morrow, for me, old mother. My father is sad that I have delayed so long in giving him grandsons to pray before his tablet when he salutes the age. He will rejoice that now I am ready to marry. The girl is all one could desire, and you hint that there is money as well. I will give many presents, much silk and jade, and you will not be forgotteu, either, so do your best."

He slipped some money into her eager old claw, and ushered her out the door, watching her hobbling off on her stumps of feet over the cobbles.

Then he looked across the street at Liu's

shop, where the shutters had already closed out the day, and he smiled....slowly, malignantly, and withal contemptuously.

The next day but one, Liu, waking out of his visions, bethought him of applying to the "go-between" himself. He mentioned the matter to Chou, who had strolled across to partakeof the eleven o'clock meal wih him.

"Ah, Liu, my friend, you are slow!" laughed Chou, comfortably. "It is already done. She is the eldest daughter of the Han family. The eldest daughter, Purple Azalea. There is a wife for one of us. Beauty, wealth.... Han Lao-yeh was prefect of Paoting-fu for some time, and you know whether that means squeeze or not! Come! Shall we marry? I am not so anxious really, but we must marry some time, and to have no sons to pray be fore one's tablet is a bad thing. There is another sister, they say. Come, let us make proposal for them, each! Which shall we have? Throw the dice to see!

More in sport than in earnest, Liu agreed. The little dice which Chou happened ____most opportunely___to have with him, were shaken up in a porcelain bowl, and then cast out on to the table. Chou said,

"The highest throw wins the eldest. Agreed?"

"Agreed!" answered Liu, throwing. They counted the spots.

"The best two out of three," said Chou.
"You might as well throw agair, and see if your luck holds."

Liu did so, and could hardly believe eyes or ears when Chou cried out with what seemed wholly unselfish joy in his voice:——

"Purple Azalea is yours! Happiness, long life, and many sons to you! I am off to arrange with my father about the betrothal. We will meet, of course, at the Golden Dream?"

Chou strode away, leaving Liu perfectly aghast at his good fortune. Now all that had to be arranged were the small details of betrothal, etc. He knew that there would be no difficulty, in all probability, as his father was rich, he was an only child, and even in his modesty could admit that his person was not unpleasing.

The negotiations went on apace. The fathers Chou and Liu paid their respects to the Han family, and inspected the two maidens gravely. Father Liu was near-sighted, a misfortune which his vanity did not permit

him to mitigate with spectacles, so when Miss Han No. I was presented to him, he saw only an indistinct blur of purple cloak edged with bright pink and green, a plump pink and white mask, and the usual high background of black hair setting off the rice paper camelias and butterflies which quivered above the girl's ears.

Father Chou in complete possession of all his faculties, chuckled as he saw the gay little inamorata of his son, and contrasted her fresh beauty with the seamed, scarred face of her sister. He further privately commended his son's taste, when he marked the querulous down-drawn corners of poor Tzu Chuan's mouth, which bespoke bad temper and discontent, and augured ill for Liu's conjugal peace of mind.

Old Liu, fast approaching his dotage, was only too delighted to get his son married at all to be particular, so long as the dot was satisfactory, so the ladies were pronounced charming; and were dismissed, giggling and embarrassed to the Inner Apartments, while the three fathers smoked many pipes, drank much tea, and discussed settlements.

Three weeks afterwards, the soothsayer

who had been consulted, gave it as his professional opinion that the day of the Wooden Mouse was the sole and only day on which it would be auspicious for the Han father and mother to return the call and inspect their future sons-in-law. Accordingly, they set out with much bustle and state, and were entertained with great kindness by the other families. The most pleasurable part of the whole arrangement, aside from the liberality of the settlements, was the unmistakable eagerness of the two young men. Voluble old Mrs. Han could not let the subject drop, all the way home, and blessed the god of luck, and of marriage, together with all the Pantheon, Buddhist, Taoist and Lamaist. for the good fortune which had befallen her ill-starred elder daughter. She could understand the eagerness in the case of White Fairy....indeed, the wilv old knowledge of the existence of the eligible Mr. Chou may have led her to honour that particular shop with her patronage. At all events, it had been a most fortunate move in all respects, in that it had accomplished almost a miracle, by establishing poor Purple Azalea so much better than could have been hoped.

The next and final visits of betrothal paid and returned, the soothsayer was again called in to fix the date for the weddings. Liu's wedding day fell first. The day of the Fire and Rat was to begin his bliss, so all sorts of preparations were hurried on, and the not distant morning dawned, finding him up, the sacrifices to his ancestors completed, and dressed in his wadded dark blue wedding gown, hours before it was time to send the "Flowery" to fetch his bride. The shop. and the pavilious in the rear, where the family lived, were cleaned, furbished up, decorated everywhere with red, the colour of joy, and a great feast laid out in the largest pavilion. At last the hour arrived. Chou had been selected to go with the bridal chair and retainers, to fetch the b ide, and he had consented with an alacrity which warmed Liu's heart to him more than it had been warmed in all the years of their curious intimacy. Indeed, Chou's whole conduct about the wedding had been more than kind and generous, and Liu felt a genuine gratitude to him, and a kind of shame that his own feeling had not always been more sincere towards his old companion. It was a pleasure to him now, to reflect that they

were to wed sisters.

At last, while Liu's impatience was waxing high, the long rich notes from two big horns, a beating of drums and clashing of cymbals heralded the approach of the bride. The procession had come a devious way to elude the pursuit of evil spirits, and as it wound along, it made a brilliant splotch of colour in the narrow street. Forty-eight of the largest beggars to be found had been secured by Liu, clothed in Turkey red, with tufts of red feathers sticking out of the tops of their caps and had been given red lacquer poles, banners, lanterns, knives, and symbols of various sorts to carry. Another crowd had joined them at the house of the Hans, to carry the boxes of clothes, the chairs, wardrobes, etc., which old Han proudly furnished, that his elder daughter might not go empty-handed to her lord. In the midst of the procession, eight stalwart coolies carried on vermilion lacquer poles scarlet chair or "Flowery" which contained the bride.

Old Liu had hired the finest sedan chair that could be got. The red broadcloth cover was a mass of embroidery hung with rich fringes, and the mirrors that represented the windows were the clearest of plate glass. In short, nothing more gorgeous was to be had in Peking.

The procession at length arrived. picturesque retainers, their rags and dirt showing under their short red coats, carried the furniture and boxes through the shop and into the courtyard where the guests were assembled, and then retired to the street again, to feast on wedding dainties. bearers set down the chair, Chou handed the key of it over to Liu, who trembling with eagerness, stepped forward and unlocked the door. The chair was tipped forward, and a little red figure bundled out clothed in what seemed to be a counterpart of the chair cover-The jewelled fringe of her head-dress covered her face completely. Liu got a glimpse of a scrap of white-washed neck and a small ear, but that was all.

He took her hand and led her through the shop, swaying along on her high shoes, until they reached the courtyard. Around the four sides, stood the wedding guests, each holding a burning incense stick. Hand in hand, the bright red and dark blue figures knelt on a square of carpet spread in the middle of the court, and prayed to Shang-ti,

the Lord of Heaven, to bless their union to send them sons, and to grant them long lifel Liu could feel her hand trembling in his, and a wave of pity for the little gay helpless thing who had been given into his keeping surged through him.

He led her into the house, seated her on one side of the k'ang, with a low table between them, where the two cups of wine were set out, together with the small cakes of chopped pork and mutton rolled in dough, which were to give him virility and her fecundity.

"We must drink the wine", he murmured softly. "Take off your headdress. It is very handsome but the face it hides is more beautiful than all the pearls and jade in the world".

She lifted her hands to comply. A pin had caught, and he bent forward to help her. The clinking jewelled crown dropped into her lap, and he settled back to look his fill on his bride. His caressing gaze sought the neverforgotten visage of the dainty little maid and ____fell upon the face of a woman he had never seen before____a face, that in spite of all the white-wash and vermillion, in spite of the elaborately painted willow-leaf eyebrows,

was pitifully scarred and marked....that was years older than the plump little face of his dreams....that bore, moreover, no sign of the sweetness, archness and amiability which had won his love.

For a speechless moment he sat looking at her. He took it all in in an instant. He had been duped and tricked by Chou.... by Chou, who, of course, was to marry the other. To make sure, he queried kindly, as soon as he could find his voice:—

"So you are my bride....and your sister is to marry....my friend? When is it to be?"

"On the day of the Golden Hen," she answered. "The fortune-teller finds all sorts of good omens for them".

"And you two are all? Your honorable parents have no other children?"

"No", she answered. "This person is the eldest. Next, White Fairy, and a little son died long ago...the same year we were ill with...."

He nodded. Yes, is was true. So this was the explanation of Chou's kindness, alacrity, helpfulness! The old wound still rankled, then, and the vengeance still kept watch. For many years Chou had concealed.

his enmity, and given no sign. Now, he had played the first cards, and they were winning ones? Well, they would see. The game was finished yet, for either of them, as not long as life was not finished. Meanwhile, he was going mechanically through the formula of drinking, loving-cup fashion with her, the water which represented the sacrificial wine, and eating the little dumplings in solemn silence.

Liu was not a bad chap at heart, and his faults were but the faults of his race, not exaggerated by any individual depravity. Marriage, besides, with him, was not the irrevocable step which it would be in a member of another race. He could have other wives, other concubines....could even send this girl back to her parents, if he found he could not live with her. Besides, he was just enough to admit that she was not to blame. It was his own fault for trusting such a matter to any one else. He had expressly asked for the eldest daughter of the Hans, and he had got her. Well, he would make the best of it, and above and beyond all, he must take care never to let Chou see his chagrin and triumph over him. But—he awould wait.

The wedding festivities went on. He joined the men in the big room, while the women came and carried off the bride to the Inner Apartments. The poor frightened thing was glad to get among her own sex again, although this stranger she so dreaded proved not so fearful after all. And as she listened to the admiring "Hai-yahs" of the guests over the presents, and their envy of her bridegroom's youth, appearance, and wealth, she began to pluck up courage, and to assume, unconsciously, little important matronly airs, amusingly like her mother's.

The first busy days of early matrimony sped by. Relatives came and met the bride, feasts were given, presents exhibited, and Liu, resigned to making the best of it, found that he had no time for thinking of Chou. He did not go to the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams", because, although he had been smoking for more than a year, he was moderate in all his habits, and it had not yet become a necessity for him.

Soon came Chou's wedding and the attendant festivities, in which the Liu's took a prominent part owing to their relationship, and the long friendship between the two-families.

Then came tranquil life once more. The two sisters saw each other occasionally, though visiting even between sisters who live opposite to each other, is not much encouraged between Chinese husbands. Liu and Chou smoked side by side again at the "Golden Dreams"; met again in the big smoky restaurant, where they dined in the dim light of the horn lanterns; and even on rare occasions once more drank samshu of Miss Lotus-Blossom's pouring.

Sons came to both men; the grandparents passed peacefully away, sure of a long line of descendants to worship their tablets; and comfort and prosperity marked the lot of the brothers-in-law. Liu's wife was content. She had given her lord sons, and that was all that could be expected of any wife. She knew she had no charms, and although custom and expediency curbed her sharp tongue somewhat, she was still not the most amiable companion a man could choose. However, she ordered his household well and comfortably, and like a sensible woman raised no objections at all when he brought a pretty concubine to install in an empty pavilion near her own apartnents. It was a pleasanter than any she could reasonably have looked forward to, and she never knew the lucky accident to which she owed her good fate.

She had one cloud in her fair sky of content—her sister. Since their marriage the two women had become dearer to each other than ever in the days when they shared the same home....perhaps because they now saw so little of each other! There had been jealousy then, to rankle in the heart of the elder, as she saw White Fairs grow up into a charming womanhood....a womanhood of which her own might have been the counterpart, if it had not been for the scourge that had dug all the beauty out of her face. Now, however, their lives were so nearly similar ... indeed Purple Azalea felt that her lot was the better of the two----that the feminine spite had died, and a deep affection took its place. This affection was cruelly hurt by the treatment her sister received from Chou. It is only in extreme cases that a wife complains of her husband. as Purple Azalea knew, because, after all, they do not expect much, poor things! White Fairy, however, had given way finally, and had sobbed out the whole story on her sister's plump shoulder. Chou was dreadful! beat her, he stayed away all the time, he smoked opium, he had installed a perfect procession of concubines in the Inner Apartments, and seldom if ever appeared in her rooms; he was playing ducks and drakes with the family money, and worst of all, he neglected to sacrifice at the graves of his father and mother. Anybody knew what that meant. She had often heard the spirit of his mother crying about the Hall of Excellent Longevity, and for her part, she was desperately afraid of hungry ghosts. She had done what she could, but all the world knew it was not the same when a daughter-in-law sacrificed as when a son attended to it. She could stand it all, but for the beatings and for the fear that the spirits of her father-and motherin-law would come some night and steal her little, little son....and she knew she never would have another!

Thus it all came out, corroborated by sundry black marks on the soft neck and pretty plump arms; and Purple Azalea's heart was troubled. She kept silence for a long time, and then determined to tell her husband every thing, urged thereto by the fear that White Fairy really would carry out her threat of killing her child and herself.

A request from his wife to see him was so unwonted an occurrence that Liu went at once to her apartments. She placed tea and sweetmeats before him, and then waited until he gave her leave to tell him the reason of her summons.

"It is my sister," she began. "This person would not trouble your honourable ears with any matter concerning her insignificant self." Thereupon she told the whole story of the poor little woman's wrongs and sufferings. She was amazed at the effect of her recital. Liu's eyes blazed, his face flushed Indian red under its usual tint of stained ivory, and he clenched his long-nailed hands in speechless rage. Hie wife had never seen him so wrought up by anything before, and he appeared in a new and terrible light to her.

When she had finished, he spoke to her reassuringly, having regained his own self-command:—

"I will do what I can. Chou is no longer a serious person, and though the Superior Man does not interfere between husband and wife, what I can do, I will."

He left her, and returned to his own pavilion. During the years of matrimony,

he had seen very little of his sister-in-law. To begin with, when she visited at his house, it was generally at an hour when he was engaged in his shop, or out following some sort of diversion. Furthermore, he studiously avoided her. He had lost her, and the sight of her only kept the hurt rankling. It was best for his own peace of mind that he did not see her at all. Confucius, too, instructs that a man shall not walk hand-in-hand with his wife's sister....and remarks, besides, that the prudent man does not stoop in a melon patch to tie his shoe!

Now, he was in a quandary. His blood boiled at the thought of that gay little thing, crushed and broken, thinking of death as a release from the brutal man who had her in He mused for a few his absolute power. moments on the thought of how tenderly he would have cared for her-in what kind hands she would have been as his wifebut those thoughts could serve no purpose other than to embitter further his regret. What could he do, however? Etiquette and custom alike forbade him mentioning Chou's wife to him, and how could he take him to task for his treatment of her? He really was in a great predicament for a dignified Chinese gentleman. He could hardly fight the man...fighting is not an expedient that commends itself to the respectable adult Chinese...and there were no laws to appeal to. White Fairy was an absolute chattel in the hands of her husband, with no hope of rescue from any fate he might design for her, now that her parents were dead.

He pondered the matter over in his mind a few days, as was his slow wont, and then determined to risk everything, even a fight, if necessary, to right his sister-in-law's wrongs.

That night he repaired to the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams", smoked his accustomed number of pipes, had his little doze and wakened, refreshed and clear-headed. to await his brother-in-law. Chou had by this time increased his pipes two or three times more than Liu's allowance, and sometimes lay all night in sodden slumber; but to-night, there had been much talk at the "Golden Dreams", so Chou had been animated and excited enough to keep off the effects of several He awoke shortly after Liu, and they had tea and a cigarette together before start-Of course, there was no. ing for home. opportunity for conversation in the rick

shaws, and Liu was rather glad of this, for he dreaded his task.

The handsome shop front, lacquered, polished and gilded, looked fine enough to set up as a cabinet in a room, with the moon shining down on it. The two rickshaws stopped, and Chou was surprised to see Liu get out of his vehiele on the side, near him. Opening a door in the big shutter which closed the whole front of the shop, he was still further surprised to find Liu following him. Once inside, the men could hardly see each other. The only light came from a few incense sticks always kept burning before the pot-bellied God of Luck, and from a candle glimmering in a big globe of horn, which hung from the ceiling.

"Pardon," said Liu, "It is late, I know, and your honouable body is tired; but I have something that must be said. White Fairy, the sister of...."

"What! At last!" cried Chou. "You have broken your silence finally. I have waited all these years to hear you speak, wondering when your rabbit's heart would drive your prudence. I have wondered how much you could see her bear, and not speak to me. I knew your little fool of a woman

would tell you, and for three years or more I have expected this moment."

"What do you mean?" cried Liu. "It is only two or three days since I have known that she was unhappy. Do you mean to say....?

"That I have tried to strike you through her? Yes! I swore vengeance on you years ago....half our life-time ago! I have always hated you-it is not only for this", he cried, pointing to the scar on his head...." I have hated you....because....I could not help it. You were hateful to me. And I have had sweet vengeance——I have it now. Do you suppose I married that girl because I wanted her? Pooh! All women are the same to me. I married her because you wanted her....and because, getting her in hands, I could hurt you through her. what can you do? My wife is my own. can do what I like with her. What can you do, I say?"

"This!" cried Liu picking up a heavy stool and springing forward. "This!"

He swung the stool aloft, and had it descended, the matter would have been settled definitely for Chou.

Just then, however, there was a shriek, and a little servant came tumbling in frantic

haste into the room, making for the street door. She was so wild with terror and excitement that she scarcely noticed the two men. It was not until Chou caught the screaming thing and shook her fiercely that she could find words.

"What is it, O base-born?" he cried.

"Oh, my Tai-tai, my mistress, my mistress!" she shrieked. "She is dead.... she is dead in there" and she pointed through the open rear door towards the women's apartments.

With one accord, the two men rushed to the rooms of White Fairy. In the dread of that moment, all enmity was forgotten. They pulled open her door, and stood motionless on the threshold.

There was a heavy scent of kerosene, and slippery elm, an odour much affected by White Fairy as a perfume. A small lamp threw a black and shapeless shadow on the wall...a shadow cast by a hideous object that hung, inert, from a beam at the far end of the room. The two men clutched each other suddenly, as something gave an impetus to the body and it turned slowly around. With an uncontrollable exclamation of disgust, the two men hid their faces in the wide

sleeves of their coats to shut out the sight. Those fearful bulging eyes, that black tognue, bitten half through its horrid swollen mass.... the strained lips, twitched nostrils, and gleaming teeth....was that the pretty gay face that had laughed at them on a happy afternoon so few short years ago? The dainty face that had won the desire of the two men who stood helpless before its present horror?....the one smitten with dismay at the result of his cruelty, the other tortured with remorse for his weak procrastination.

Liu was the first to recover himself, While Chou still stood, shivering and helpless, against the door, Liu strode forward, and drawing his knife from the case in his girdle, began to cut down the figure. It was a gruesome task. The knife was dull, the knitted silk scarf was stout, and it seemed that he was sawing for hours at the tough cord, all the time holding that awful face close to his own.

He finally severed the silk, and laid the body down on the k'ang. Chou had sufficiently recovered himself to call for help, and soon confusion reigned. Purple Azalea had been awakened by the frantic little servant, after repeated knockings, and hurried across the narrow street, rousing the night with her shrieks. A doctor eventually arrived, but his most potent remedies proved useless. Life was gone...driven out of the little frame where it had so loved to dwell, by a stronger force....Despair.

Nothing more could be done. Day dawned, blue and garish, to find the weeping women still struggling to bring back vitality to the fast chilling body. The two men, exhausted by their different emotions, sat and watched the sister's agony. Then the irresistable march of commonplace life swept them on again, and they must needs take up the burden of daily routine, which continues in the face of the greatest sorrow and darkest tragedy.

Liu raised his wife from her dead sister's side, and tried to coax her home. He was very gentle, and he felt a sudden comfort in his kindness. As she was lifting the straw mat which hung in front of the rear door of the shop, she turned around to face Chou, who had followed them, with his scarcely-wakened little son, into the courtyard. The friendlessness of the little orphan smote her with pity, and a sudden rushing realization of the responsibility of the man for the

tragedy overcame her, and she stood there, a fury, pouring out upon him a perfect torrent of vituperation and abuse. Her eyes glowed red, her scarred face writhed and wrinkled, and in a sort of ecstacy of rage, she launched her condemnation at the wretch, who, cowed and crestfallen, had not a word to reply to her.

Liu took her by the arm to lead her away, but she turned upon him furiously.

"And you," she cried....feeble, weak thing that calls himself man! You could have saved her! I told you all her story, and begged you to interfere to save her from this leprous frog who cannot look at me! And what did you do? Pondered it over in your stagnant mind, to see if you could avoid asserting yourself as a man, for just once in your life....spineless toad that you are! But, oh! it is too late now....and you did not love her as I did."

Liu controlled himself, and answered her gently-

"Come home, mother of my sons. You are distraught with grief. And you are right....I did not love her....as you did."

Rather aghast at her temerity, after her outburst, in attacking her own husband, she submitted to be led through the silk shop, and across the street to their own dwelling. Once in the pavilion, she threw herself down on the k'ang, and gave herself up to her grief.

In the other house, everything was done decorously, and Chou seemed to be trying to salve his conscience by ordering all the funeral preparations to be as lavish as possible. Being a shop-keeper, he could not have religious services in his own house, so the body, in a most gorgeously lacquered and gilded coffin was carried to one of the largest temples in the capital, and for twenty-one days and nights, eight priests prayed unceasingly beside it. Finally, the coffin, covered with cement, was deposited in the courtyard of a Taoist temple, to remain until such time as the geomancer should discover the appointed date and place of burial.

The chastening effect of the tragedy upon Chou was more due to the shock and horror of the ghastly surprise than to any permanent hurt to his affections, and was consequently evanescent. He very soon took up his old course of life again. Liu and Purple Azalea were drawn into a closer communion by the grief, and were better friends than they had ever been. He for the first time seemed to appreciate the vigorous

decision of her character, which contrasted so strongly with his own vacillation and lack of purpose. At the same time, however, as the months sped on, he began to recognize a tacit reproach in her attitude toward him. There was no need to put it into words. The little sister was not yet avenged.

In spite of the revelation of that dreadful night, Liu and Chou had drifted back into their usual intimacy. Their habits having been formed together for so long, it would have been impossible for them to have avoided each other entirely, without one of them changing his whole manner of living. Liu, it is true, shunned his brother-in-law as much as possible at theatres and restaurants, but theyalways met at the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams", where they still shared the same mat, and cooked over a common lamp. have changed this arrangement would have necessitated explanatious and there is nothing a Chinese defends so closely from public comment as his private family life, his feudsand friendships.

So, night after night, the two rickshaws, leaving at the same time, trundled one behind the other, down the narrow street, through an alley, across the wide dusty thoroughfare

which leads from Chien Gate to the Temple of Heaven, then again along a narrow crowded street of shops, until turning sharply to the left they followed a short lane and brought up in a courtyard where stood three houses. All was silence here, the hush which broods in the precincts of deadly vice. The middle of three houses, three stories high, gorgeous with much gilt and varnish over its yellow wood, and flaunting with artificial flowers, was the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams". A heavy wadded dark-blue curtain with the handsome character for opium stitched upon it, shielded the door.

There was more than chance actuating Liu in starting from his house at the same time with Chon. Liu had lately seldom let his brother-in-law out of his sight in the evenings. Together they went to the rendezvous, and together they returned. Chou noticed nothing in this surveillance more than a re-establishment of their old relations, and while he was relieved that the other apparently bore him no animosity, he was secretly very contemptuous of such forbearance. Often, indeed, in the general conversations which occurred before the pipes began to take effect, he found chance to make some

sarcastic references to meekness under injurywhich would have required a duller brainthan Liu's to misunderstand.

Liu had been keeping careful count of the number of pipes it required to produce stupor in Chou, and he had been regulating his own smoking so that he was the last man in the apartment to succumb to slumber. He was able to guage pretty accurately now, and was sure to be the last one awake—not excepting the old coolie attendant, who, generally, last of all sought repose, curled up on the floor.

There were two benches, the height of a low chair, and about four or five feet wide, running opposite each other along the narrow room. These benches were divided into six compartments, each, by small partitions about three feet high. Two smokers were accommodated in each compartment, and were quite invisible to their neighbours on either side, unless these persons, unexpectedly curious, should raise themselves on their knees and stretch their necks over the dividing boards. The compartment where Liu and Chou lay was the third on the left on eutering, and was thus far enough up the room to be secure from observation from the "office,"

outside, where the proprietor was always busy weighing out opium on twenty-cent pieces.

The two men lay on a mat of olive green drill, with the smoker's tab'e, four inches high, between them. Their utensils, which they owned together, were of finely carved ivory, picked up here and there to replace commoner things, during the years they had been smoking together. The little spirit lamp glowed between them, lighting up the impassive countenances fitfully.

The room cleanly papered in white, was lighted by a big foreign lamp, which hung over the centre of the aisle. The air was close, and full of the faint sickening smell of burnt sugar and crushed poppies, which is the odour of burning opium. Portly handsome Chinese gentlemen, in long gowns of decorous grey or blue satin, lay on their sides in the various compartments, their knees drawn up, their heads resting upon a fine shapely hand, or lowered to rest on a cylindrical pillow, stuffed with rice chaff. Between each two, on the little rectangular lacquer tables, the outfit was arranged on a tray....the pipe, the tiny opium jar, of silver or ivory, ----the lamp and needle----all convenient to hands soon to become too lax and inert to be capable of much reaching. All of the men were of middle age, healthy and placid, except two who shared the compartment directly opposite that of the brothers-in-law. These were men of seventy, who had been smoking for some thirty years, and in their haggard parchment-covered faces, their shaking withered claws, gave evidence of age and decrepitude, aggravated by a long course of indulgence.

The early part of the evening was always quite gay. Each man, as he came in, hurried to his compartment, threw off his outdoor robe. and settled himself, while the old coolie brought him a lighted spirit lamp and his pipe___which the coolie was often so obliging as to try first, to see that it was in proper order, and drew well! A couple of pipes finished, to satisfy the craving, each smoker was ready to sit up aud gossip about the news of the day. teachers from the Legations were hailed with enthusiasm, as they always had something new and curious to tell about the erratic foreigners whom they instructed or more appreciable still, some little state secret which had been carelessly dropped in the presence of a coolie, remarkable for nothing save the dense ignorance he displayed of all languages, including his own. Tea and cigarettes were handed around between pipes, steaming rags would be supplied to mop damp faces, and perhaps an hour or more would pass pleasantly enough, until the moderate smokers would leave for their homes, and the more confirmed victims would settle themselves to oblivion.

One night, just a year after the suicide of Chou's wife, the two men took their accustomed places on the mat. The conversation, started by a Legation teacher, turned upon Christianity, and the curious inconsistencies of the Bible, as looked at from their point of view, unassisted by the reconciling power of "Faith." They were comparing the "Eye for an eye" doctrine with the injunction to "turn the other cheek," and Chou, much excited by his drug, was rabidly sarcastic in his remarks, all of which were to Liu's address.

Lin made no reply at the moment, but a little while after, he turned carelessly to Chou, and asked him if he remembered what had happened a year ago that night. Chou thought an instant, and then dropped his bantering with an oath, and subsided on to his mat in silence.

One by one the moderate smokers went home, while the others fell into silence. sounds were heard but the click of a needle against a metal tray, or the gurgling in a stem, as some stupefied man smoked his pipe The air got closer and heavier with the sickish scent of the drug, and the odour of garlic and grease the relaxed bodies threw Liu was covertly watching Chou's face. Chou had a great many pipes that night, but he was still quite excited. However, after half an hour or so, Liu noticed heavy puffs forming under his eyes, and a generel thickening of the evelids. His lower lip drooped pendulously, and saliva wet the lower corner of his mouth. Oblivion was coming, but not fast enough. Chou's almost nerveless hand could scarcely twirl the needle to cook more opium, so Liu took up as much as might be held on the tip of a teaspoon, on his own needle, twirled the thick syrup over the flame of the lamp until it began to stew and swell like a boiling raisin. Then he reached across the low table, and firmly on to the opening kneaded it the bowl of Chou's pipe, piercing it with re-heated needle. Chou looked his thanks, held the pipe over the lamp until

the cooled paste began once more to sputter swell, and then he drew great full draughts of the thick white smoke deep into his lungs, inhaling it again through mouth and nostrils. Three draws sufficed to empty the pipe. Then it fell from his numb fingers. and Liu picked it up, filled it again, cooked it, and gently put the jade mouthpiece into Chou's mouth. Slowly he inhaled the smoke until this pipe was empty, and three times did the kindly Liu prepare him fresh ones. At length the listless lips could no longer hold the mouthpiece, and the head fell heavily down upon the pillow. The lamp in the middle of the room had burned down low, the low-ceilinged room was filled at the top with a heavy layer of the thick white smoke which swirled sluggishly in strange shapes at each slight draught. No noise was heard now, except heavy breathing from the five or six supine sleepers. Liu alone was awake, mentally and physically. He had just enough of the drug to stimulate him. His usually inactive brain was working wildly, strange thoughts were rushing through his mind, and it was all he could do to imitate the heaviness of the overcome smoker. He saw queer figures in the sluggish smoke. Weird

monsters writhed and twisted in a viscid ooze. The black characters on the red banners stood out with iridescent borders that hurt his eyes with their glare. Before it all, just beyond the reach of his arm, the face of White Fairy hung, unsupported by anything visible, as it had hung in all its horror every night since the dreadful time when he had held it close to his own, as he cut it down. His blood rushed in an audible tumult through his veins, beating in his tympana like a war drum. He felt strong, powerful, a force of mind and soul to which he was a stranger. Impatiently he waited. That Chou's body was asleep, he knew. But he wanted to be sure of a mental lethargy also. There might still be a possibility that though his body was held in bonds so tight that his greatest effort of will could scarcely suffice to move a finger, he could after all, in the face of a deadly peril, summon enough power from the subconscious to struggle or cry out. Once or twice, Liu spoke to the sleeping man, waiting a long time between each experiment to give his detached faculties time to direct a reply. None came. Liu heated the opium needle red hot, and dropped it apparently by accident on Chou's hand. There was

instant scorching of the flesh, but the hand lay motionless. The man's features were impassive, his eyes remained closed, and his breathing came deep and regularly.

Liu felt a strange exultation glow through him. He was alone with his helpless enemyas much alone as though the other inmates of the room were dead. To his superexcited mind, all the events of their long intimacy seemed to throw themselves in living pictures on the bank of heavy smoke which hung beneath the ceiling. All the insults and slights of boyish days, the sneers with which, in their young manhood, Chou's quicker wit had been able to aggravate his sensitive nature, the great deceit of the marriage, and, crowning crime of all, the years of brutality, of which he had been ignorant, and of which he had been made aware too late to prevent their tragic culmination.

To Liu's fevered imagination, it seemed that he could look through the impassive mask of Chou's bleached ivory face, and see the real man in naked hideousness of character. The slack pendulous lips, pale, dry, and puffed in and out by his stertorous breathing, indexed the bestiality of his tastes. His thick wide nostrils, expanding like an

animal's with each heavy breath, marked his brutality. The shut swollen lids hid eyes that gleamed with malice and cunning, and to Liu's distorted fancy, they seemed even now to be watching him, and mocking his apparent indecision.

"She was a gay little happy thing, that day", he murmured, "and you stole her by a deceit like your own vile soul. You made her, poor helpless child, the instrument of your hate for me! And she killed herselfchoked herself with her own red scarf. Her eyes! Her strained lips and swollen tongue! Shall I see them forever?"

He groaned under his breath, and put out his hand to force back the spectre which seemed actually to hang before him.

"No", he whispered, in the hoarse tones of the opium slave. "I shall hide the picture, Chou, companion of my boyhood, behind your dead face!"

Quite quietly, he reached over behind Chou's back, and gently brought the long thick queue around in front of the sleeping figure. He made a slip-loop of the wiry braid, and passed it around Chou's fat neck. He wound the braided silken end of it around his own hand, and knelt over the recumbent figure. He rested his left hand on Chou's warm moist forehead, and his palm rasped against the bristles of the neglected scalp, as he braced himself for a firm purchase. Then he calmly and steadily pulled with all his strength.

It seemed to him that he was pulling for hours on that warm oily rope. There was a slight rattle as the breath was shut out of Chou's lungs, and his legs straightened themselves, and drew back up before his chest spasmodically.

Liu bent over him closer, and with his lips close to the dying man's ear, he murmured only:—

"White Fairy."

He would have him know, with his last possible glimmer of consciousness, why he died.

But the bulging bloodshot eyes gave no sign of speculation or recognition. They were turned inward with the curious look of internal inspection that the eyes of the narcotized patient display, and Chou passed from his poppy dreams into the sleep that has no wakening.

Satisfied that his work was done, and completely done, Liu loosened the improvised halter after a while, and arranged it neatly behind the body.

He was trembling from the great muscular exertion he had made and he found it a relief to change his attitude. He shoved aside the little golden bat, symbol of happiness, that formed the cover of his tiny opium jar, and dipping out his allowance, twirled it over the lamp, watching carefully to see that it did not burn. It took several pipes to quiet him, but at length he lay down peaceful and contented.

He heard a little noise and looked across at the opposite box. One of the old men was lying with his eyes half open, his toothless mouth twitching in a nervous grin. His watery old far-sighted eyes were fixed upon the dreadful face of Chou. Liu, whom he was not noticing, had no idea how long the old man had been watching. It seemed to him years since he had last looked at the box with its sleeping occupants. But it did not matter. Liu lay in a happy lethargy, reflecting that nothing mattered. The old man would think that it was a picture of the smoke. One : aw so much worse things in the smoke, when one was unlucky, that the face of a strangled man should not startle one. Liu was now lying back luxuriously on a cloud. An opalescent sky curved over

him, and the whole universe had dropped away from beneath him. He hung in space, at rest. Opposite him, the face of Chou grimaced hideously at him in impotent fear and rage, and at last, oh, gracious fact! after all these months, he saw no more the awful visage of the girl he loved.

The pipe clattered from his graspless fingers on to the tray, and a contented sigh told that he slept.



We two, Sybil Drummond and I, sat looking thoughtfully into the fire. I was glad there was a fire. It often takes the place of a third party during a difficult conversation, or a conference in which there are apt to be painful pauses. It is almost as useful as a stage diplomat's cigarette.

We were blue, we were shaken, we were unhappy. Little Mollie Heatherdale had, the day before, gone off with startling suddenness, to parts unknown, with the good-looking Danish violinist who had been filling a semi-social, semi-professional engagement in town for the preceding six months. We three "girls", as we still called ourselves, had been faithful friends for more years than any of us cared to count...ever since, in fact, Mollie, just fifteen, and just out of the convent, had shyly joined the duet of harmony which Sybil and I had played for a

year before. I think as we sat there, reflecting, and pondering on what her fate might be, we both remembered the day she was introduced to us. (School-girls are particular about introductions!)

How young, how innocent, how helpless she looked in her little black dress, and straw "sailor"! And all these years she had kept the youth, the helplessness, and the innocence in her looks and manners, and as a consequence, had claimed and got protection and love from everyone...except, alas!, her husband.

Now, she was gone, no one knew where, and no one knew to what fate!

"After all", said Sybil, putting another lump of sugar in her tea, and thereby making me green with envy, as I diluted my saccharine tablet, "I don't suppose that either of us is really surprised. It must have come sooner or later....something must have! No one but Mollie could have stood Ralph Heatherdale as long as this. I think it was her sense of humour that kept her up....that, and an insatiable curiosity to know what he would do next. But, oh Elizabeth, if we only knew where she is!"

I could do nothing but sigh, and watch the convenient fire. Sybil was so peculiarly distressed over the whole occurrence that it set me to thinking. She seemed to understand, to sympathise with Mollie's act and Mollie's point of view so much more deeply than I did.

Of course, their lives had been different, and their joys and sorrows different. They had drawn blanks in the lottery of marriage, while I had drawn a prize. However, as is the way of the world, their blanks had remained to them, while my prize had been taken from me before the honeymoon had time to become gibbous. Whereupon, they had each and both refused to condole with me, ever after, saying that I was happier in my solitude, with my unspoiled illusions and my unbroken dreams, memories though they were, than I had any right to be. When Sybil spoke of my "resignation," Mollie scoffed, and said "Contentment"!

Be that all as it may, I could see that Sybil could feel the terrors of the possibilities more keenly than I, so I thought things over. Sybil was beautiful, with her slim figure still belying her real age; she was clever, romantic, talented; and she was notoriously neglected and unhappy. How was it, then, that what had happened to Mollie Heatherdale had never chanced to happen to Sybil Drummond?

- "Sybil", said I, breaking the silence, how did it happen that no one ever—"
- "It has happened, Elizabeth", she broke in hurriedly. "Give me another cup of tea. Thanks! It did happen, and that's why I.... oh, Elizabeth.... why I envy... and tremble for Mollie!
- "You never told me," I reproached her. We tell each other "everything".
- "Oh, it was nothing, really....only a glimpse—the vision of an hour, of what might have been, if I had not been...."
- "Too strong," I helped her, as she hesitated for a word.
- "No, not that not that at all. I wasn't strong. I shouldn't have been, nor good, nor virtuous, nor any of the rest of it," she said hurriedly. "Don't think that, dear!"

I stared rather, but soothed her with the assurance that I would not think any better of her than I could help, if she insisted. She laughed a little at that, twirled her rings so that they flashed in the firelight, then began, nervously:—

"I'll tell you all about it. You know Mr. Manning?"

"I wondered....", I answered, aloud. "Yes, I know him, but you have scarcely spoken to him for over a year....in fact, since that night at the Cousins' ball, when I thought he was just a bit too marked in his attentions.

"Ye, I know," she answered, "Elizabeth, that is the man who stands for all I have wanted, all I have dreamed of, in life. Remember how we used to talk about possible ideals, when we were girls, and how we all.___ except you...agreed afterwards that they did not exist except in school-girls' imaginations? Well, I found mine, finally ... and it was more wonderful than all my dreams! You know for yourself how stunning he is as to looks, and how charming he is. You have heard him play, besides. But you do not know what his mind is you cannot tell companionship.__the the charm of his delight of finding brains like his the responsiveness, oh, well, we were simply flint and steel, that's all!"

"I've seen the sparks", I commented. I had heard Sybil, flushed and happy, talking,

laughing in an ecstary of enjoyment with young Manning.... "scintillating", as Mollie called it. I knew my clever girl, and how she hungered for some one whose mind found an interest in more than race ponies, shares, and vintages.

"And...." I helped her, as she subsided into a reminiscent silence that made her face look like a mask of Despair.

"Oh, well, you know we saw a good deal of each other. He was always blowing in for tea, or John would pick him up in the club, and bring him home to dinner...glad, as he expressed it, that I had found a youngster to play with. In other words, I had some diversion that would keep me good-tempered, while he was at the...club."

"Yes, at the club." I repeated. That was a euphemism we had tacitly agreed upon, to explain John's absences.

"Elizabeth, I soon found out the state of my feelings, and I was disgusted with myself, because he is younger than I. He's only twenty-seven, now, and I am twenty-eight, you know." She looked at me rather challengingly.

I did a little sum in mental arithmetic. "Yes, you are twenty-eight," I replied,

which was strictly true. It would have been inhuman to mention the couple of years or so, which had been dropped out of all of our calculations, just before our thirtieth birthdays.

"But you don't look it...by years", I assured her, which was also strictly true. She certainly didn't, in that light, and with that tulle bow under her left ear. Her hair, which was bronze...of God's burnishing, not the chemist's...curled in a young way, too, about her temples, and the nape of her neck.

"Well," she went on, the statistics having been settled to everyone's satisfaction, "he played the game beautifully, and so did I. He never showed me by a word, or even a tone, that I was anything to him more than a friend's wife, and I give you my word, I didn't flirt the least bit, really!"

(Dear, dear Sybil! She could no more help flirting than she could help the colour of her big brown eyes!)

"But what is it; Elizabeth, that makes words so unnecessary in a case like that?"

In my one and only case, words had been necessary, and had been duly spoken, but perhaps the legitimate was conducted on a different plan from the illicit, so I only looked profound, and made the Confucian reply, "What, indeed?"

"I knew, and he knew," she went on, "weeks before it happened, and that is what made it so natural."

"Put, dear, what happened?" I entreated, "You haven't told me yet."

"Oh! well, one night he was to have come to dinner with John...it was the night after the Cousins' ball,...and after, we were to try over some music...."

"You and John?" This was casting a new aspersion on John. However, one could imagine him playing the trombone.

"No, don't be silly! He and I, of course!"
Well, he came, but____ John didn't!"

I nodded. I understood.

"I think they had a new consignment of champagne at the club," she explained. I nodded again. Explanations were old things, now, relics of an early-married loyalty, when there was still a hope that things would be better some day!"

"We had dinner. We loafed on the verandah under the jasmine, a little while, over the coffee. There was a moon, I remember."

I groaned. There always is a moon!

"Then the boy called me, and I went into the dining-room to write down some things that were wanted from the shops in the morning. I was gone some little time, and when I went out on to the verandah again, I found he wasn't there. I heard a note or two on the piano, so I went into the drawing-room. He had just started to look for me, and was standing in the middle of the room, under the chandelier, as I entered. The strong light falling down upon him, made him look so splendid, so strong, so young...."

(John was forty....)

"....that, I don't know why, but I just walked up to him as naturally as possible, and he took me in his arms, and held me for a moment, tight, and we neither of us said a word. Then, he tipped my face up by my chin, and I was almost blinded by the light from the chandelier, and....by the light I saw in his eyes....perhaps reflected from mine! Then he kissed me."

Sybil paused. The fire cracked, and I rustled a bit, silkily, as I leaned forward in my interest to hear more.

"He kissed me, and still holding my face tipped up by my chin, he looked, and looked, as though he could never look enough. Then, he said....what do you think he said?"

I hastily ran over the usual stock.... "dearest", "heart of my heart," "my adored one", etc., etc., but they didn't seem to fit in with the tone of Sybil's query.

"I don't know", I said, solemnly. It seemed to call for solemnity.

"He said, "Why, Sybil! You have a little wrinkle on each side of your mouth! I never noticed it before."

She stopped a moment, and swallowed some more tea.

"You know", she said, "I have two little wrinkles by my mouth. They are from laughing."

I nodded. I also have two little wrinkles by my mouth, from laughing. And some around my eyes. Also a few in my forehead. These are from surprise. Why not? They merely argue amiability, and a charming credulity....nothing else, necessarily.

"Well," I asked, as she seemed to think she had told me everything. "And then?"

"I took myself out of his arms, and stood there, under the light of the chandelier. I was just in front of the mirror over the mantel, and I saw myself plainly, as we

women do see ourselves occasionally, without the mask made by our vanity, our hope that the years don't show, our happiness in the admiration of those we love. I saw it all. every real line, every shadow that years and tears had made. I counted those years, and then looked at him tall, strong, and young. I counted the difference between us now, and I added ten birthdays to my coming It all took but a minute, as such thoughts will, but I lived the ten years in the moment. I lived to be middle-aged....worse. old....clinging frantically to youth....to his youth....Ah!" Sybil shuddered, and I felt uncomfortable, and preened myself a bit. It is so silly to think about such things!

"I'm afraid I got rather tragic, then," she continued, "because I walked over to him again, and kissed him as one kisses one's dead. It was good-bye, if he could have only known it....and good-bye to more than to him. It was good-bye to youth, to love.... and to hope. Then I ran out of the room, and went upstairs, sending down word that I must be alone."

"The next day?" Iasked.

"The next day", Sybil went on, and her voice fairly throbbed with exultation, with

diesepotation

triumph, and withal, an aching regret, as she spoke...."the next day, I got a letter from him. Elizabeth, there have not been ten such letters written since the beginning of the world, and it makes me dizzy, sometimes, when I think of all it said. He asked me to go away with him...to go to India,...fancy!...India, with him!...and I...oh, my God! I had to shut the door of Paradise in my face."

Sybil choked a bit, and then sat, examining the condition of her pink nails.

"You answered his letter, of course," ---- and I would have given much to have seen the letter Sybil could write, stirred as she was stirred by this event.

"I answered him, of course, and I knew my answer must be final, so I....I blush all over with horror, as I remember what I did. I wrote as though it was all a joke....a mere vulgar flirtation, that I....was used to!.... and which he was not to take seriously. I assured him that I thought too much of my home....home, Elizabeth!....my position. my reputation, to accept his suggestion.... that he was not to make too much of a moment's folly, that he must forget that it ever happened, and be only friends. In short,

it was as impossible, and hateful a letter as anyone could invent, written in as flippant, and scoffing a tone as I am capable of, and it had the desired effect. He wrote once more, and that letter cut me to the quick, although it was exactly what I had played for. Ughl it makes me shudder, yet, when I think of it! And he never came near me, and never spoke to me again, except on the rare occasions when we are thrown together at some function or other, and he is forced to notice me. He shows his contempt then, so, that I am often afraid some one will observe it."

"And that is why," she added elliptically, that I understand, and sympathise with Mollie Heatherdale, and why I tremble for her."

"But I don't understand", I said falsely Being a woman, of course I understood, but I seemed to be expected to say something more. Besides, although I know all the possibilities of Sybil's manifold nature, for good and evil, it didn't seem polite to accept her own condemnation of her moral principles without protest.

"Of course you were in reality too good. But...after all, I'm afraid I should have dashed away with him...why didn't you?" I asked in a light and airy tone. I rarely use this tone, now ... in fact, not since that fatal day when I stepped on a weighing machine, heard the music-box play the "Pilgrims' Chorus," and received a ticket marked "168lbs.", with the further comfort, "Great thou art, and shalt be greater." The tone had the effect of startling Sybil, She looked up and said, "Fancy your asking me why! I told you what he said when he kissed me. If the first thing he saw in my face, the first time he kissed me, was a wrinkle, what might he not see in my face before the last time he kissed me? And how soon do you suppose that last kiss would come?"

I never was good at mathematics, and that problem sounded altogether too much like something in Algebra that used to drive me particularly wild; so I wisely kept silent, pondering the while on the many motives that aid in safe-guarding a woman's honour. And perhaps I also wondered a bit what would have happened if Sybil had gone in for pink lamp-shades, and had avoided top lights as sedulously as Mollie Heatherdale had done, ever since we dropped those unimportant years out of our calendars.



It may as well be explained in the beginning that Fu Hsing's pride was of his progressive spirit. Like most intelligent Chinese, he cherished an unspoken contempt for the backward, conservative Manchus who were the rulers of his country, and who, with their wealth, their power, their arrogance and brutality, constituted the heaviest of drags on the wheel of progress, already inclined to revolve but slowly in huge self-centered China.

Fu Hsing was decidly pro-foreign. Had he not served a long and profitable apprenticeship in a great shop in Shanghai? And therefore, upon the death of his father, he had come back to Peking to carry on the ancestral trade of tailoring with all modern improvements. For generations, his people had been tailors, and in his sleep, Fu Hsing could have fashioned the most elaborate of

Chinese garments, daintily and substantially, so cunning had his fingers become from inherited tendencies and a life-long practice.

Fu Hsing was ambitious. Indeed, ambition was the natural concomitant of his peculiar pride. And he meditated having a tailoring establishment that should make his plodding neighbours sit up. As Fu Hsing's purpose was to cater to foreign custom entirely, it was great good luck that the ancestral abode was in a position close to hotels, and foreign shops. It stood a little way down a lane just off the Hatamen Street....the wide main street which cuts Peking's centre and has been re-named by a foreign power with ineffectual irony after its murdered minister. Even Fu Hsing, with all his his "up-to-dateness," would not think of calling the location of his residence "near the Ketteler Strasse". A name which has identified a thoroughfare for five hundred years, is not to be easily changed for the most puissant of foreign "war-lords".

The shop of his family, being one of the better class had been approached, as is usual with Chiness houses, through a gate in a high blank wall. Once well inside, the customer had been wont to be ushered into a dim pavilion, seated formally beside a table, and supplied with tea in small bowls, the while he and his polite host discussed, first, topics relative to anything rather than tailoring. After perhaps the third cup of tea, the business in hand might be mentioned, and at the conclusion ot a really pleasant afternoon's visit, the customer took a ceremonious departure, having commissioned the tailor to prepare a gown which might last the whole of the customer's life-time.

Fu Hsing, emerging from his twentyseven months of mourning, wearing with filial piety the regulation amount of white in his costume, set about to change all this. Down came the wall, the gate, and the Feng-Shui screen; and in their stead up rose a proper shop, with glass windows looking on to the lane, a door that boasted knob and lock, an American stove whose chimney wobbled through a pane of one of the windows, and all day in the cold weather, belched thick yellow smoke up where the tiled top of the old wall once had risen. There were work-tables. chairs, sewing machines, and even, so far had Fu Hsing advanced, a model of a woman's form, headless, legless and armless, which, perched upon a revolving stand, positively

fascinated, at first, the eight or ten workmen Fu Hsing gathered about him. Indeed, a dark rumour circulated that Fu Hsing himself had been observed surreptitiously to pat the fashionable "straight-front" figure on its rounded shoulder....not with any amorous touch, be it explained, but with a quick staccato pat of exultation; and in course of time, it came to be tacitly understood that this figure stood, in some dim way, for Fu Hsing's idea of progress.

The shop created all the excitement Fu Hsing could have desired, and even after three years of its existence, every day there were still from ten to twenty curious noses flattened against the windows which were the proprietor's especial pride and joy. Over the door, a white sign-board, creaking in the wind or blistering in the sun, announced to all and sundry that here dwelt.

Fu Hsing from Shanghai.

Tailor.

Specilly for foreign of all Kind.

This masterpiece was greatly admired, and was held to lend distinction to the whole thoroughfare. It added a new bitterness to the lot of the blind beggar who basked in the

sun at the end of the lane, that he could not see its glories, but could only have themdescribed to him by enthusiastic vagrants.

So the portly Chinese waxed prosperous. He had learned to read English with an elision of all the r's, and to write his curious sentences in a florid, heavily-shaded hand of the Spenserian school, at the mission school in Shanghai. All of these accomplishments he caused to be instructed to his young son, who, growing up about the place, formed the sole connecting link between the shop, which was the great world, and that mysterious inner compound where dwelt Fu Hsing's family.

That mysterious inner world! All Chinese are secretive about their home life, and guard it jealously from the intimate knowledge of even their best friends; but Fu Hsing, so open and progressive in all else, was more than Oriental in the seclusion he maintained regarding those Inner Apartments. To see Fu Hsing and Fu-lien-sheng, his young son, arrayed in all the glory of boots and broadcloth, their Suuday costume, sallying forth, prayer-book in hand, to the English Church on the Sabbath, one would look instinctively, but un-

In front of the narrow rear door of the tailoring establishment, a wall one brick thick, fourteen feet high, and white-washed, had been erected. It was accepted by the workmen without comnent, mental or oral, as a Feng Shui screen, and it had rows of plants in pots extending cheerfully, its full length. In its length lay its one peculiarity. An ordinary Feng-Shui screen need not have

been so high, neither would it have necessarily extended the entire width of the court yard, leaving but the narrowest space at either end, through which Fu Hsing and Fu lien-cheng could come and go, between home and shop. To an occidental mind, it might have seemed that Fu Shing had erected that wall, less to keep out spirits of evil design, than to frustrate curiosity, of either good or evil intent.

Curiosity, therefore, if such existed, was effectually baffled, and no one knew who-dwelt in the old pavilions of the Fu's, nor whose were the voices that rose in altercation from behind the wall,

Behind the wall! Progress touched it lightly, that inner life! The big south pavilion, stone floored, high gabled, lattice-fronted, was the home of Fu Hsing, his wife, and daughter. Fu lien-cheng, as became the dignity of the only son, had a smaller pavilion on the left, and to the right a corresponding small pavilion completed the symmetry of the arrangements. In the rear, connected by a passage which could be closed by a locked door, a small court was devoted to the servants' quarters and the kitchen-flowers in pots, palms in bowls and small trees in tubs dotted the

big paved courtyard. A great stone bowl held water where gaudy gold-fish swam about. A huge bronze incense-burner overflowed with morning glory vines. Littlegay-breasted birds sang in cages, or hopped tamely about, from the servants' shoulders to the ground. There were sunshine, comfort, and a quiet peace behind the wall, and there was no reason visible why Fu Hsing should not have been thoroughly consistent to his ideas, in his way of living, and have thrown his pretty home open hospitably to his friends, inviting his foreign customers to partake of tea, as they gave their orders, in the gracious cordiality of his ancestors.

Fu Hsing was large and placid, with a smooth, finely-grained skin, from which good living had kept away all tendency to wrinkling, though he was well on towards fifty, and was consulting "go-betweens" relative to his son's marriage, feeling that it was full time that there were grandsons in the dwelling. A frugal, industrious life, a competency in middle age, the prospect of a wealthy and honoured retirement...so one would have summed the man up as he stepped from his shop into the courtyard, one fine autumn evening after the late closing time.

His wife, also plump and placid, greeted him pleasantly, for a very comfortable affection existed between them, dating from the day, twenty years ago, when she had fulfilled the whole duty of womankind, and had presented the world with Fu lien-cheng. The daughter who had appeared some years later was perhaps a disappointment to him, though not to her. Still, Fu Hsing had achieved a higher idea of womanhood than those of his countrymen who had not had his. elevating advantages, so the disappointment was more conventional than real. The daughter, now a young girl, just contemplating taking her long black hair out of a pig-tail and doing it up to indicate that she was a "complete woman," was greatly beloved by both parents, and her father showed his fine teeth in a smile of affection, as she bowed a greeting to him and handed him a cup of teaand a pipe. It was a very pretty and gratifying picture of domestic happiness, and showed the commendable results of a liberal and Christian education on the Chinese.

Fu Hsing drank the scalding tea in three noisy gulps, stuffed some fibres of tobacco in the little bowl of his pipe, and seated himself luxuriously on the k'ang, for a quiet smoke

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before his evening meal.

Just then his wife, who had been standing in the open door, rushed across the verandah, down the steps and across the court, exactly in time to catch by the pig-tail, the little slave girl who was scuttling along the passage towards the kitchen, carrying a large green bowl.

"Egg of a turtle", cried Fu-ching-shy, as she cuffed the child soundly. "Have I told you that only the brown bowl was to go into the East Hall? Have I told you that the green bowl is your lord's, and is never to go into the East Hall?" Each note of interrogation was emphasized by a stinging smack on the little dirty cheek.

"Excellency! This miserable creature forgot! Oh, this time, pardon! There will not be another offence!" the child cried, as she tried to wriggle her pig-tail out of the firm plump hand that held it.

"Another offence! Let there be another offence, and you shall be sold South to the Flower Boats!" This threat, a consignment to a life of infamy in Canton, was the sword of Damocles which hung over the head of the half-comprehending, but wholly frightened child. It elicited another scream, a wriggle

which released her, though nearly at the cost of her scalp, and she flung herself down before her mistress. Fu-ching-shy dragged her up by the shoulder and thrust her before her into the kitchen.

"Get boiling water," she ordered, "and clean that green bowl thoroughly."

The child obeyed, scalding the piece of porcelain, and rubbing it carefully along the edges, where it could have been touched by lips. The mistress watched her narrowly, for some moments, and then pronounced the cleaning sufficient. When she returned to the South Pavilion, Fu Hsing asked idly:—

"What was it?"

"That lazy one had carried your estimable rice bowl into the East Hall," Fu chingshy answered casually.

"What?" exclaimed Fu Hsing, lifting himself off his elbow, and dropping his pipe.

"Oh, there is no fear," said Fu-ching-shy placidly. "It has been well cleaned with ashes and soap."

"If she does that again, I will kill her," he exclaimed in a repressed fury, which brought thick purple veins up on his forehead. Tell her. She shall be beaten to death before my eyes! Tell her."

If Fu Hsing had not always been quoted by the earnest young curate of the English Church and foreign congregation, as a shining example and positive proof of the possibility of completely civilizing and christianizing a Chinese, one might have been inclined to shupdər somewhat at the wholly savage fury he displayed. But the curate and several earnest lady missionaries had discovered in the course of the last three years that Fu Hsing's conversion was genuine, and that the christianizing was not merely a thin veneer laid over the Tartar underneath. They were convinced of this and nothing could have destroyed their faith in the belief. Fu-chingshy, however, trembled unaccountably at the wrath of this soft Christian.

"This person was at fault," she said. "Another time, this person will be present when meals are prepared for the East Hall."

Fu Hsing's rage subsided presently, and his furious tone was replaced by an anxious one, as he looked rather helplessly at Fuching-shy, saying:

"That East Hall! It is the one thing Supposing it should that frightens me! become known? We should be ruined. one would come here. There would be no more big orders from the Legations. Our officers would never employ me." Fu Hsing was possessive of the Fnglish Legation Guard, and had even been heard to mention "Our King" enthusiastically,....not to say loyally.

"What can be done?" he asked his wife.

"Could he not be...it is not as though he were your father...but...if he were to swallow gold...." She hesitated these suggestions, watching timorously their effect on her husband.

He looked at her, shocked, but in a way thankfully, being glad that some one had put into words for him a thought he had not dared to express himself. Was it possible? Could the old man be prevailed upon to do it? must die, that he knew for himself---his death might come any time, and surely his life could have no charm for him.___and Fulien-cheng could not be married so long as he was alive. Fu Hsing knew that so far the secret was safe in the hands of those who now alone he'd it, but.... another woman.... a young woman who would come to them a stranger, and possibly a hostile stranger.... no, it was not to be risked, or contemplated for a moment. And meantime, every day through treachery or inadvertence, Besides, Fu-lien-cheng was growing older and becoming restive under the restraints of home. was evincing a desire to be out nights, without his father. Fu Hsing had heard him humming a little song one day, with a curious quavering trill in an upper note. Fu Hsing knew exactly who sang that song. and whose voice quavered prettily on that upper note....a knowledge that he did not wish his son to acquire until he had been the father of a family some years. It was immaterial if Fu-lien-cheng hummed Miss Lotus-Blossom's ditties, when there were grandsons playing about the sunny court; until then, Fu Hsing preferred that his heir should confine his vocal exercises to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers," which he sang with a great deal of vim at Sunday services. So the suggestion, impossible as it seemed, which Fu-ching-shy had hazarded,

With a sudden access of energy, he swung himself up to his full six feet of dignified height, and went out into the court. A light glimmered feebly through the papered

was welcome to Fu Hsing.

lattices of the East Hall. Fu Hsing hesitated for a moment, and then went up the two stone steps on to the narrow verandah of the Hall, and tapped at the door.

A tremulous old voice eagerly bade him enter. Fu Hsing went in.

The hall was smaller and lower than his own pavilion. It was in a great state of dilapidation, everywhere, except lattice windows which looked on to the court. These were freshly and cleanly papered, leaving no hole through which one could look out or look in. The ceiling was blackened by smoke and soot, and was hung with cobwebs. The walls had once been papered with a gay paper, having a yellow ground over which meandered a pink vine. This was stained, discoloured, mildewed, and hung in great torn strips, leaving visible patches of the damp brick wall of the house. A small kerosene lamp hung from a curtainpole, which extended rafter-like from one wall to the other, high up. This lamp had a broad shade of tin, painted white, which threw a glare down upon the room. k'ang was torn and dirty, and was crawling with vermin. The flat cushions of Turkey red had lost almost all trace of their original

colour, and were mere dirty pads. In a hole in the stone floor, in front of the middle of the k'ang, a charcoal fire glowed, while immediately in front of the fire-hole, another two foot well contained a small stock of fuel charcoal sticks, and balls of dung Several brown earthenware and coal-dust. bowls were scattered about on a small low table, which stood on the centre of the k'ang. The bowls held fragments of fish, bits of fried pork, and grains of rice, left uneaten.

An old man, just risen from the k'ang, bowed and bowed before Fu Hsing, almost prostrating himself in front of the portly visitor.

Fu Hsing stood a moment. Insensitive as his olfactory nerve generally was, just now coming in from the fresh cool evening, his nostrils dilated, and his shocked lungs protested for an instant, against the compound given them as air. The sour smell of carbonic dioxide, the odour of sleep, of greasy food, of unaired bedding, of excrement, of kerosene oil, of unwashed humanity, of atmosphere many times breathed, assailed him. And through it all, pervading it all, insistent as a ray of light, a peculiar hot smell was perceptible, which though not

actually disagreeable in itself, clutched his throat in a spasm of horror, knowing, as he did, what it stood for.

The old eyes twinkled gladly through their rheum, the old voice quavered a welcome, and the withered lips were stretched in a kindly, grateful smile.

The old man was so genuinely glad to see him, and so thankful to have the long monotony of his days broken by this visit, that Fu Hsing hesitated for a moment, in compunction for the object of his visit. Only for a moment, however...and then, with a rush, came over him all the reasons for his step.

With a wave of his hand, he put a stop to the old man's salutations, and Seated himself on the k'ang, taking the place of honour on the left. There was noticeable, however, in his whole demeanour, a shrinking, a horrified gathering of himself together, and a careful avoidance of everything the old man touched. Fu Hsing looked at his companion without speaking. The contrast between them was startling. Fu Hsing's large well-nourished form was clad in a rich dark-blue satin robe, the grey fur lining of which hugged his fat neck cosily. The old

man was wrapped in a robe of grey cotton, dirty and foul. It was lined with sheepskin, and matted locks of the long wool, stiff with dirt and grease, stuck out spikily around his throat. His arms remained folded, as if he had thrust his hands into his sleeves for warmth.

He apologised in his quavering, curiously inarticulate voice for not offering tea and tobacco. Fu Hsing waved away the apology, as he had waved away the salutations. Taking out his own pipe and tobacco, he lit it and smoked in meditative silence, the while the old man apprehensively fussed about, moving the low table with his elbow, or endeavouring by the same means to get the half-emptied bowls out of Fu Hsing's way. Finally, Fu Hsing spoke:—

"My uncle," he began. The old man bowed and smiled his timid, kindly smile.

"My uncle, since the death of my honoured father, your great elder brother, you have been my care."

The old man made as though he would express gratitude. Fu Hsing repressed him.

"You know that things are not the same in Peking now, as in the time when you and my father took over this house and business from my noble grandfather. Conditions have changed mightily. The foreign devils have come here again, as they came once before, in your boyhood, and this time only stayed their hands before our town was entirely destroyed. That was their turn. Now, it is ours. China will no longer sleep, but must wake, and join the march of the nations....and there is much gain for us. These foreigners are all rich, all—and they are easily plucked, besides. I know, when I came back from Shanghai, you said I was one of them; well, perhaps. But for love of them? No. For admiration, perhaps, for advantage, and for gain... always for gain.'

The old man gave his polite attention to this preamble, following it nevertheless rather vaguely, with the air of wondering what it all had to do with him. Fu Hsing, whose eyes had glittered greedily with every mention of the word "gain", resumed:—

"I am a member of the church, as is my son, also. All my customers are foreigners, men and women. Our income is much greater than it ever was before, and my son can marry, and marry well. I have already in my eye Golden Orchid, the daughter of Jung, who is a member of the Board of Astronomers.

It is true that she is a Manchu, but Jung has influence, and with my money added, what is to prevent my son rising to anything? It is not outside of the possible, that he become one of the Wai-wu-pu...or a governor.... even a Viceroy. His foreign bias will help him to that, while his Manchu wife will be a guarantee of faith to those in the Forbidden City."

All this, Fu Hsing muttered musingly, rather as though he were pleasing himself by describing aloud the bright pictures of his imagination.

The old man listened with unabated attention, his weak eyes lighting up with pride, as he seemed to see before him, actually, the family greatness realized. Fu Hsing suddenly turned to him, and looking at him earnestly, said impressively:-

"My uncle, all this is in your hands. It rests with you and you alone, whether all Those who have gone before us, and who yet live to us, shall be worthily worshipped.... whether the line of the Fu's shall continue increasing in wealth and glory, or whether it shall cease in the person of my son; whether there will always be sons and grandsons to prepare us the feasts, and sacrifice at our tombs, as before, or whether you, I and all our honoured fathers shall wander eternally as hungry ghosts, haunting the ruined and uncared-for tombs of our family."

Fu Hsing's fellow-communicants would have been edified to have heard this speech; also, to have marked its earnestness — the same earnestness they so highly commended in his professions of faith, and his enthusiastic subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles.

When Fu Hsing finished his exordium, the old man looked bewildered and unhappy.

"This person?" he queried. 'What can this person do about it? I am old and poor, and exist only by the light of your favour. Besides, I am ill, ill with the Sickness that never heals!" Fu Hsing suddered, as again that sharp insistent, hot smell smote his nostrils.

"It is of that I wished to speak", Full Hsing continued. "You, O brother of my father, are ill of the Sickness that never heals. You must die, and no one can say how soon. You have been kept secluded here through no unkindness. Confucius teaches me my duty to my father's brother, but the duty to my father must also not be forgotten. My son must give us sons, and while you are here,

there can be no question of his marriage. We, the family and the servants, have kept the secret well, but if a strange young woman be brought here, who can tell how much longer it would remain a secret? The yellow River can be dammed, but who can hold a woman's tongue?"

The old man bowed his head. this old home of his family: loved it in spite of the fact that all day long he must remain alone here, seeing no one but the little slave girl, who timorously brought him his food, and fled away in a panic if he attempted conversation with her; loved it, notwithstanding that he was never allowed out of the room until after dark, when the shop was closed and all the workmen had gone. He thought of the days of his youth, when he, although the second son, looked forward to a life of busy effort in the ancestral trade: matrimony; to the fine son that should come to him. He thought of that dreadful day when he first became aware of the rare scourge which had smitten him; of his good old mother's effort to comfort him; of his cunning attempts at concealment; of his final retirement forever to the inner apartments, when the ravages had become apparent,

and he could no longer show his hands; of his greater seclusion when his elder brother died, and Fu Hsing came back to take possession as heir, imbued with monstrous and extravagant foreign ideas. The place was home to him—part of his life, and now Fu Hsing was asking him to leave it.

This was what his nephew's speech meant to him. The old man's mind, never keen in his healthy youth, was further dulled by years of isolation and solitude, as well as by the progress of his disease. He looked up.

"I am old, and poor, and ill with the Sickness that never heals. Where could I go? Let me, I pray you, stay here, until I salute the age. I will never be seen. I will never go out, even at night. Bring home the young wife. She need never come into the East Hall. Tell her it is sealed up. Tell her....".

Fu Hsing interrupted him with a dignified wave of his hand.

"The wild camel of the desert may be tamed, but who can curb a woman's curiosity?" he said. "You do not understand me", he went on. "Not only must your presence here in the future be not known, but your presence here in the past must also rest a secret. If

it were known," he said slowly, "not one of the foreigners would ever come here again.....and not many of our own people. One does not fear the Flower of Heaven,..... smallpox, as our officers call it, but who does not dread the Numbing Wind?" It was a great shock to Fu Hsing's politeness to name Leprosy to the old man. He bent his head in deprecation, and the old man bowed his absolution, the while a tear formed slowly on his cheek.

Fu Hsing continued, "You have just said that you know that you must die. No one can cure you—even the surgeons of our officers can do nothing against the Sickness that never heals.

"Now, there is this to ask you: you have lived alone here for many years. You have had no pleasures, and few comforts. You have been warm and well-fed, it is true; so much I could do for you. But your dwelling is miserable, and out of repair. I cannot have workmen come here to improve it, nor can I allow any member of my family to undertake such a task."

How much of this was said to salve Fu Hsing's own conscience for the neglect the zuncle had suffered, does not appear. He went on with an air of great sympathy: -

"I am sorry for you, and I would do all I could, to make your last hours happier, to see that you enjoy yourself. I will tell you plainly. You do not forget that you must die anyway....why not fix a date...?"

Fu Hsing paused after this question. His uncle looked at him confusedly. He could not understand it all: but his face lighted up, and his head began to tremble, as he realized that he was to be allowed to enjoy himself until he died. So much he understood, and the kindly smile thanked Fu Hsing much more eloquently than the quavering voice could have done.

Fu Hsing paused for a moment, then took up the conversation again:—

"When the date arrives, you shall have the finest coffin that can be got in Peking____ red lacquer, inlaid with gold, if you like. You shall have forty-eight bearers, if you will. And in the meantime, you shall have all that our gayest life can give you____ theatres, gambling, a cart at your disposal, the best of food___ much samshu___ what you ask shall be yours. And all I ask is___ and you must not forget that you must die anyway.__ that on a certain day___ say, in

the month of the Water and Mouse"—Fu Hsing named a date six months hence——
"You will....swallow gold."

Swallow gold! The old man understood now. His rheumy eyes opened, and his slack jaw dropped as he gazed in horror at Fu Hsing. To die! He was being asked to die, and by his own hand! He sat and marvelled.

And Fu Hsing, too, sat and marvelled at the tenacity with which this poor creature clung to his loathsome life.

They sat in silence a few moments. The glare from the pit of glowing fire in the floor lit up their dark faces like a reflection from the furnaces of hell. The white light from the painted lamp-shade beat down upon them, as if to illumine the black corners of their benighted brains. It showed the eager intense look on Fu Hsing's face as he waited for the old man's conclusion. It showed the horror in the watery eyes of the leper, and it showed a dark purple mark, like liver, on his neck and cheek where the Sickness was creeping....to eat the withered old face.

Fu Hsing suddedly became oppressed with the horror of the whole scene. He arose, adjusted his satin robe, and said:—

"I will go now, and will come to-morrow night for your answer. Think over everything I have said...all I have offered you ...the red lacquer coffin...the gaiety...the wine...the...the...rest and do not forget that death waits for you, anyway."

Fu Hsing strode to the door. His uncle rose and bowed politely before him in farewell, his hands still seeming to be concealed in the loose sleeves of his coat. As the old man moved, Fu Hsing again detected that curious hot smell, and made haste to get out into the court. He shut the door quickly behind him, and stood a moment to breathe deeply of the cool starlit air. His first deep breath cut his lungs like a knife, and he shook off his coat and hung it on a hook on his verandah, to rid it of the pestilent odour he felt clung about it.

The old man, left alone, sat and pondered. At first the only thought of which he was clear was the glad remembrance that Fu Hsing was coming to see him again. That excited him, and gave him something to look forward to. He wished Fu Hsing had said the next night but one; that would have given him two days of pleasant anticipation and the visit would not have been over

so soon. Fu Hsing might not come again for moons....for six moons....six woons.... what was to happen in six moons? Ah, yes! He was to die....to swallow gold....to have a red lacquer coffin and forty-eight bearers; and he was not to forget, in the meantime, that he was ill of the Sickness that never heals, and that death waited for him. No, he would not forget that. He looked down at the stumps of feet. When he walked, he hobbled upon crutches. His feet were.... gone. He shook back his sleeves. He was not concealing his hands in his coat cuff for warmth, for his hands were___gone. He thought of the condition of his body. He had not seen it for a long time, but...he knew. He felt the slight pricking and burning in his face and neck, the little itching which told him that the Sickness was creeping.... creeping. No, he would not forget that he was to die, anyway.

A red lacquer coffin...and forty-eight bearers; and in the meantime, the greatest amount of happiness that could be given him anyway. When he was dead, his grand-nephew could marry. He thought a little sadly, that the greatest happiness which they could give him, would be to let him

hold in his arms the little son that would come of that marriage. But that could not be not nuless he died, could there be a baby son. A life for a life! Where had he heard that? A life for a life! An old, wornout, loathsome life for a little, happy, hopeful life! Ah, yes! Why not? As he must die in any case! And he must not forget the red lacquer coffin....and....the baby son!

So he smiled his kindly smile, clambered clumsily up on to the k'ang, and blew out the white light of the kerosene lamp. He rolled himself up in a wadded rug, and settled himself to sleep, quite firm in his mind that he would swallow gold in six moons.... for the sake of the good time....the red lacquer coffin and the baby son. It must be a great happiness to have a little son. He had never had one, but perhaps this one would hear how the old man had given up his life that the baby might be ... and perhaps the baby, when he became a man, would sacrifice to his tablet ... and take rice to his tomb....yes, to his tomb....for he was to die, anyway. The old man slept.

The next evening, Fu Hsing came in at the same time, and found his uncle quite excited and eager. He was enthusiastic in his reception of Fu Hsing's plans. All should be as suggested. The old man agreed to everything, and nothing was left but for Fu Hsing to fulfil his part of the bargain.

On the morrow, Fu Hsing detailed one of the men-servants, a very poor member of the clan, to attend especially on the old leper. He was provided with new clothes, and as the weather was becoming colder and it could be worn without remark, was given, though a little early in season, a cloth hood which covered face all but his eyes and nose. The neck and cheek were quite concealed and the hands were hidden in the sleeves of the plum-coloured satin coat.

The old man was taken about everywhere by Fu Hsing. He was like a timid child at first after his years of isolation, and trembled at meeting strangers and going into crowded houses. The strangeness soon wore off, however, and then his delight was the delight of a child. His amusements were innocent enough. He could not get enough of the theatre, nor of temple fairs. Every great temple, as it was thrown open for its yearly festival, saw him, attended by the faithful Fu Hsing, wandering around the courts among the gay gorgeously-coloured crowds, smiling his kindly old smile at the pretty painted women. He had an especially tender smile for the ones who bore in their arms little sons.

The cart was frequently brought into requisition, and they would rumble out to Chienmen, or Hatamen, and spend the afternoon looking over silks and furs in the Chinese city. Legation Street, with the queer handsome houses af the great foreigners, was a constant source of wonder to him; and one day he was nearly relieved of the obligation to redeem his promise in six months, being in a fair way to redeem it on the spot, through the fright into which his first sight of the great steam-roller on the Hatamen threw him.

The months rolled along. Day after day, they looked in at the big coffin shop, to see how the last bed of the old man was progressing. He was mightily pleased with its dimensions, and with the thickness of the wood, and was quite impatient over the delay in lacquering...he was so anxious to see it finished.

Meanwhile, Fu Hsing, much relieved, had made overtures to Jung regarding the marri-

age of his son. Negotiations were proceeding favourably, and Fu Hsing and his wife had already paid their first visit to Jung's house, and were making arrangements to send the old leper out on a long trip to a pagoda outside the Chinese city on the afternoon when the Jung's were to return their visit. Fu lien-cheng who had accidentally seen Golden Orchid, and loved her for her beauty, was in a fever of delight and desire for his nuptials to take place.

The time set for the fulfilment of the leper's promise was drawing very near. Hsing and he had not spoken of it for some time. The old man seemed to be so happy in the enjoyment of the life his nephew provided for him, that the latter felt a delicacy in mentioning the subject again.

At last, there was but a week to wait. Fu Hsing had filled his part of the bargain admirably, and the old man had wanted for nothing. It was the happiest term of his life....much happier than that far off golden youth, that he used to dream over in the long lonely hours of his isolation. And now, it was to end. His wits had quickened in the past six months of association with his fellows again, and he knew quite well what the un-

spoken question in Fu Hsing's shiny black eyes meant. Had he forgotten? No.... he had not forgotten. He had never for one moment forgotten, and he meant to keep his He could not help hearing talk about word. the approaching marriage, and, in fact, had been presented to Jung Lao-yeh in the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams", whither he had gone a few times to wait while Fu Hsing indulged in a pipe or two. He knew that the dates of nativity of the two parties had been put into the hands of an astrologer, and that the day for the wedding might be found anytime now.

Fu Hsing was getting anxious, too. He hoped the leper would say something about the affair, but he kept silent obstinately. Three days before the appointed date, Fu Hsing went out alone, and on his return, stepped into the East Hall to speak to his uncle. After a little desultory conversation, Fu Hsing rose to take leave, but before smoothing down the skirt of his satin robe, he produced a small package, which he laid on the low table, on the k'ang. He was going out, having made no remark, when he was suddenly stopped by a recollection, and with a smile of pity, opened the package so that

the old man could get at the contents. Then he left the Hall.

The old man sat quite still, fascinated, looking at the little white pills in the box. He knew quite well what it was....it was the "gold" he was to swallow in three days. He wondered what stuff it was....whether it would kill him instantly; whether it would No...he was sure Fu Hsing would not want him to suffer. He had never suffered in the long years of his illness, and the son of his brother would not ask....butsuppose the very act of dying was an agony? That was a new thought, which had never occurred to him before. The fact of death, its ultimate occurrence, had never appalled him, but the act of dying now frightened him to his very soul. He sat trembling. Cold waves rushed over him. The blood shuddered back to his heart in a very panic. He could not die....it was too much to ask of him! Life was sweet.... there was no pain, no uncertainty in life ----while in death----who could tell what would come with death?

With the dead stump of his wrist, white frozen curds, he moved the box of pills, paper and all, close to him. Morphine! them discussing it at the "Dwelling of Golden Dreams"—the dreadful new preparation of opium, which one did not smoke, and which bound one in its thrall so that often only death released one. Well...it meant sleep....Fu Hsing was so far merciful. But what if death hurt? What if it were a dreadful pang in the last supreme moment? The thought haunted him. He felt his purpose dying out in his soul, before a sheer physical fear.

Three days later, the coffin came home. It required twelve coolies to carry it, unoccupied as it was. It was magnificent. The background of blood-red lacquer glowed under golden dragons, bats, and exquisite characters, significant of luck and happiness, and the inside was as fine as the outside. The cover was so heavy that two men could lift it only with difficulty, and it fitted so perfectly that when it was on, not a breath of air could penetrate It would be generations before such within. a coffin would fall to pieces, even if it stood out in the fields, merely wrapped in rushes; while enclosed in the family vault, it would endure for ages. It was put down in the courtyard, with the cover on trestles beside

it. The goldfish swam through the fire of its red reflection in their bowl and a pet sparrow flew down from his cage immediately, and perched on the edge of it. The whole family stood around looking at it, while the cat rubbed her head luxuriusly against a polished corner. The old man could not help being pleased ---if only that cold fear would leave off gripping his heart! It was true that he had never hoped to lie at last in such a bed as this. Fu Hsing must have spent thousands on the wonderful box but oh! he could not die! Why could they not send him away somewhere? He would go to the farthest province of China, and stay there for ever, if only they would let him live! He turned to Fu Hsing and tried to thank him, but his cracked voice shook, and, trembling and cold, he murmured:-

"I cannot! I cannot!"

Fu Hsing watched him as he stumbled up the steps into the East Hall. Then father, mother and son looked at each other. The daughter, the only one not in the secret, turned away with a shrug of her plump shoulders, thinking that her father had gone mad and was indulging in an orgie of filial piety, to cap all the proceedings of the last six months with such an extravagance as this.

"He fails us!" said Fu Hsing, the purple veins starting out on his forehead, below the blue of his shaven scalp. Fu Ching-shy murmured,

"He must not! Speak to him!"

Fu Hsing strode into the East Hall. The old man sat cowering on the k'ang, huddled up and quivering with an abject fear. He looked up piteously, like a dog who expects a blow, when Fu Hsing opened the door.

"I cannot! I cannot!" he cried, his very voice a prayer for mercy. "Send me away somewhere. You introduced me to all these people as your uncle from the country. Send me to the country.___or anywhere! I cannot! I cannot!"

With a sudden movement, he swept the box of morphine pills into the well of fire at his feet. Then he looked almost defiantly at his nephew.

Fu Hsing, for one moment was blind with fury. Instantly, however, he got himself under strong restraint. His carefully cherished respectability must not be lost by any rashness. Not daring to speak, he left the Hall.

The old man sat, trembling at every sound for a long time after Fu Hsing went

out. He did not know what to expect. The look of fury on Fu Hsing's face frightened him as much as the thought of dying had done. He was afraid to live and afraid to die. He remained nearly the whole night, shuddering over the fire. If only his disease would kill him! Curiously enough, he did not dread a death that came to him naturally; but as far as he could tell, the sickness had made no noticeable inroads in the past six months. He came of a long-lived race, and felt himself still far off dissolution.

Father and son looked at each other gloomily as they sat over their dinner that night. The astrologer had found the auspicious date for the marriage, and it was barely twelve days hence. It could not be postponed without causing comment, and perhaps -arousing suspicion in the minds of the bride's family, and this was not a time for suspicions to be aroused. Fu Hsing had quantities of orders on hand, and was going next day to fit a white chiffon ball dress on one of the voung ladies of "Our Legation." If it should be known to them that he had come from tending a leper! Fu Hsing saw his establishment and fortune crumbling down like a mud hut in the rains.

Fu lien-cheng sulkily plied his chopsticks without a word. He imagined Golden Orchid bestowed upon a more prompt suitor, and there was murder in his heart. He glowered darkly over the strips of greasy pastry he was packing into his mouth with his ivory chop-sticks.

After a time of silent cogitation, Fu. Hsing uttered an exclamation of relief. He had an idea. Fu lien-cheng, in exemplary filial respect, asked no questions.

The next morning Fu Hsing went into the East Hall. The old man with a porcelain spoon tied to his less maimed wrist, was listlessly eating his morning meal. He cringed before his stern kinsman, but, reassured by the expression he saw on the latter's face, began again to pour out his entreaties to be allowed to go away. Fu Hsing seemed more placable on this occasion than he had been the night before, and appeared to consider the proposition favourably. They sat there some moments, discussing ways and means, and what place to fix upon as the destination. When Fu Hsing rose to go, he said:—

"Yes, it is the best, after all. You shall go away. When I come back this afternoon, we will decide finally. The old man's spirits rose, and he sat all day over the fire wondering where he would be sent, how he would be maintained, and about all the little details of his future, quite relieved and happy once again.

The thoughts of Fu Hsing were not on his work that afternoon, or he would not have driven a pin into the white shoulder over which he was laying folds of chiffon.

"Tailor," the young girl screamed. "Mind what you are doing! You must have driven that pin in half an inch! What's the matter with you to-day? Are you crazy?"

"Excuse", said Fu Hsing. "To-day, I have great tloublo."

"Well, leave your troubles at home next time, and don't take me for a pin-cushion. I want this frock for the day after to-morrow, do you hear? You had better bring it to-morrow!" she ordered.

"Yes, madam," he answered, at first. Then he hesitated and added,

"Excuse, madam. Not to-mollow. Next day morning. Have got death in my house."

"Oh, I'm sorry, tailor," the girl answered. "That's too bad, I'm sure. Who died? What did they die of? Anything catching?"

"No, madam, my uncle. He died, for he is too old." said Fu Hsing.

"Oh, died of old age, did he? Well, he's better off, tailor. Now, don't forget about my dress. I want it for sure, early day after to-morrow. And see that the girdle is tighter."

Fu Hsing tied the dainty fabric up in a square of dark blue cloth, and took his way home.

It was sunset when he arrived, and the workmen were finishing up the afternoon's work. Fu Hsing put the bundle on a shelf, and went through into the inner courtyard, locking behind him the door of the shop. The place was quiet. No one was in the South Pavilion and he remembered that his women folk were gone to tea with the Jung family. He locked the door of communication between the kitchen and his premises, and then stood out in the courtyard for a moment, irresolute, absently holding a spray jasmine against his nose. All at once he became aware of voices in the East Hall and, going in, found his son discussing plans of the proposed trip with the leper.

After greetings, warm and cordial on the part of his uncle, Fu Hsing suddenly said,

keep it here, away from you."

The old man bridled at being called "Elder Uncle," and also at the thought of taking the wonderful coffin with him. In the midst of all his fear and distress, he had been reluctant to leave behind him that gorgeous bed wherein he had lately hoped to sleep his last sleep. Timidly he advanced an idea which occurred to him.

"Could not this person travel in it? It could be bound on to my cart, and my bed could be arranged in it, making everything quite comfortable." He coveted the excitement and admiration which would be inspired by his triumphal progress through the country, in such a gorgeous equipage.

A spasm passed over Fu Hsing's face. His inscrutable countenance was not easily read as a rule, but surely relief....and joyappeared there for a flash.

"An excellent plan," he said. "But sometimes it has occurred to me that the coffin is too short for you. Do you think that you could lie at full length in it, and rest comfortably?"

The old man was of the opinion that he could, but Fu Hsing seemed to be still solicitously doubtful; so, overjoyed at being released from his dread promise, and anxious to propitiate his kinsman, the old man suggested that he try it, and himself led the way into the courtyard.

The coffin was still standing out in the open, with a matting awning built over to protect it from the weather, Fu lien-cheng removed the awning, while Fu Hsing carefully spread a mat in the bottom of the great box. Fu lien-cheng thought he heard the jingle of gold at the moment, but concluded that it was only some loose coins rattling in his father's dangling purse.

The old man looked with gleeful pride at the gorgeous red and gold box, smiling his kindly smile in gratitude to Fu Hsing and the youth. He was very uncertain on his maimed feet, and required the assistance of father and son, to step over the high side of the coffin. Once in, he stood for a moment looking about him, and then let himself gradually down into a sitting position.

Fu Hsing looked at Fu-lien-cheng. The look, in its intensity of expression, seemed to shout his plan to his quick-witted son. The

latter hesitated, and turned a livid lead colour. Beads of perspiration broke out over his forehead and scalp. The old man stretched himself luxuriously on the mat, and called up to Fu Hsing, assuring him that the coffin was quite long enough.

His nephew, bending over something, made no reply, until the old man called again. Then he asked,

"Is it comfortable?"

"Quite comfortable," assented the old man, turning on his side.

Instantly there was a crash, and the cover of the coffin fell from the hands of Fu Hsing and Fu lien-cheng, into its place, like a slab of stone.

Father and son straightened themselves, and stood opposite each other, panting. It had been a heavy weight to handle hastily. The purple veins in Fu Hsing's forehead throbbed and beat. Fu lien-cheng wiped small streams of sweat off his livid, hideous face. Both men were racked with an ague.

The red box glowed translucently in a vagrant beam of the dying sun, as though it were saturated with blood. From within it, came muffled knockings and bumpings, which, only agitated at first, increased in frequency

and violence for a few moments. Then there was a hush, and suddenly a scream of such mortal agony, such desperate despair broke from the gaudy coffin, that the guilty father and son were fain to clutch each other in a grip of horror that drove their long nails through cloth and fur into shrinking flesh. After the scream, there were grunts, as of an animal choking, and spasmodic thuds that spoke of involuntary contortions and struggles. Fu Hsing and Fu lien-cheng gazed at each other, in ghastly expectancy, waiting. The wan, cold twilight wrapped them in its sad light, and presently all was still. There was only to be heard the dull whirring of a sewing-machine, as one of the workmen in the shop hurried at his task.

The two sank down on the coffin, their trembling limbs refusing longer to bear their big bodies. A thin trickle of blood flowed down Fu Hsing's chin. He had bitten his under lip quite through. Fu lien-cheng still wiped streams of sweat from his leaden face.

After a little while, Fu-Hsing spoke pantingly, with much licking of his dry mouth:—

"I shall have the funeral from the church. Being a Christian, I must do so. Besides, it is quicker."

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Fu lien-cheng started up.

"The money!" he cried. "The seven pieces of cash to pay the toll over the bridge of the Ni-Ho!

"I put it in first....under the mat. Seven sovereigns. It is better luck if the money is gold!" his father answered.

"We shall have to work quickly to have the East Hall cleaned," said Fu lien-cheng.

"Yes, and I shall be able now to invite the ladies from the mission to call on Fu ching-shy."

The funeral took place two days afterwards. It attracted some attention, as being the first funeral given by a Christian Chinese to an unbaptized relative. It was observed how plainly grief showed in the faces of Fu Hsing and his son.

The earnest young curate was really eloquent in his address during the service; in his room that night, he knelt in prayer and offered up sincere thanks that his work was showing some result...he expressed it, "that the seed which he had sown was putting forth fruit". The lady missionaries called on Fu ching-shy, and were received very prettily in the East Hall, which, they exclaimed, "was quite a modern drawing-room." It

contained four clocks, and a gramophone. They all said that it was a pity that there had not been more familiar intercourse between people of the same faith; also, that sorrow should bring us all nearer together.

The marriage, for urgent private reasons, was celebrated perhaps rather quickly after a death in the family, but as everybody said, in the case of such a distant relation, it made a difference. In due course, the baby son came, and was brought up to pay particular attention to the sacrifices to his great-granduncle's tablet. Fu Hsing explained that this was done out of deference to the wishes of his son's wife, who was a Manchu, and consequently clung to the old beliefs. As for himself, as has been before remarked, he took a particular pride in being above all the exploded superstitions of his narrow-minded countrymen; as was quite consistent with his progressiveness, his culture, and his civilization.

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